

CINEFANTASTIQUE

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THE STAND

STEPHEN KING'S
HORROR EPIC

King, surrounded by the
apocalyptic phantoms of his
ABC miniseries depicting
plague-ravaged America.



TIM BURTON'S
"ED WOOD"

"WOLF" MAN
JACK NICHOLSON

"BABYLON 5"
THE SERIES LAUNCH

Volume 25 Number 2



TRANCERS 4

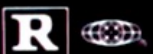
—Jack of Swords—



Tim Thomerson returns as Jack Deth!
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by beautiful damsels in distress,
wizards in hiding, and a gang of
rebel peasants.

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Director of Photography ADOLFO BARTOLI, A.I.C. Edited by LISA BROMWELL Music by GARY FRY Production Designer MIRCEA NEAGU
Costume Designer OANA PAUNESCU Makeup Effects by ALCHEMYFX Casting by MacDONALD/BULLINGTON, C.S.A.
Produced by VLAD PAUNESCU and OANA PAUNESCU Executive Producer CHARLES BAND
Screenplay by PETER DAVID Directed by DAVID NUTTER



Rated R for language and for
some violence and sensuality

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The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder."

APRIL, 1994

With all the viewing options of cable, syndication and the networks, horror, fantasy and science fiction is booming on television. This issue highlights the premiere of *BABYLON 5*, a science fiction series that challenges *STAR TREK*'s monopoly on space opera, plus previews of ABC's eight-hour miniseries of Stephen King's *THE STAND* and Showtime cable's foray into Alfred Hitchcock territory with *BIRDS II*.

BABYLON 5 made its debut in January on Warner Bros' Prime Time Network consortium of independent stations and evidenced a flair for action and special effects that suggested the tone of *STAR WARS*, but with a more adult slant. Mark A. Altman provides this issue's look behind-the-scenes of the series' production in a converted warehouse in Los Angeles, illustrating how filmmaking economies have stretched the series' lower-than-*STAR TREK* budget to achieve some truly impressive results. Altman also focuses on the dazzling computer-graphic visual effects of Valencia's Foundation Imaging and the ambitious prosthetic makeup work of Sylmar's Optic Nerve. Plus something you wouldn't expect: an episode guide to the upcoming season, thanks to the crystal ball of series creator J. Michael Straczynski, who has the show's five-year plan all mapped out.

Stephen King's *THE STAND* isn't set to air on ABC until May's ratings sweeps. This issue's extensive preview provides an advance peek at the filming of what is widely considered to be the horror author's greatest work. It's a dream project that King himself has gotten behind as screenwriter and executive producer. Writer Michael Beeler looks at the ambitious makeup effects work by Steve Johnson's XFX, Inc., and King scholar Gary Wood covers the history of how the project got abandoned as a feature film. King's work has often been butchered by other filmmakers. On the other hand, King himself has been responsible for the likes of *MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE* and *SLEEPWALKERS*. *Frederick S. Clarke*



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ED WOOD

Tim Burton films a black & white ode to the '50s sci-fi schlockmeister for Disney.

By Mark Carducci

Everywhere one looks in the media today, the relentless strip mining of popular culture for the baby boomer generation continues unabated (witness *THE FLINTSTONES*, *THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES*, et al). One has to wonder sometimes where it will all end? *CHARLIE THE TUNA: THE MOVIE*?

Most of these "projects" smack of one thing only: simple studio greed. But now comes *ED WOOD*, a strange kind of culmination and at the same time a heady antidote to this tiresome trend if ever there was one.

Though he was himself an undiluted product of 1930s popular culture, raised on Universal horror films, Republic serials and the monthly pulp fiction magazines, exploitation director Ed Wood couldn't be more obscure to general moviegoing audiences. But the man behind *ED WOOD* couldn't be any less: filmmaker Tim Burton.

Still in the thick of his critical and commercial success with his groundbreaking animation effort *THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS*, Burton is currently in post-production on perhaps his most risky, least likely, yet most personal film to date, a biopic about the bizarre and poignant life of the so-called "Worst Director of All Time," Edward D. Wood Jr. Disney's Touchstone Pictures plans to open the film in the Fall. Burton cast Johnny Depp (*EDWARD SCISSORHANDS*)



Johnny Depp, Burton's *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS*, as Wood, who earned his reputation as "the worst filmmaker of all time," pitching ideas in Hollywood.

as Wood, and Martin Landau as Bela Lugosi, in makeup by Rick Baker. The relationship between Wood and Lugosi, his filmic idol, who worked with Wood late in his career, is key to the drama and Burton's attraction to the material.

In an essay in *Film Comment*, film journalist J. Hoberman called Wood "a toadstool on the edge of Hollywood; a denizen not of Hollywood's Poverty Row but of Hollywood's Skid Row." Harsh words, perhaps, but largely true. The auteur of the genuinely surreal docudrama *GLEN OR GLENDA*, the mad scientist flick *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER*, and the notorious sci-fi/horror pastiche *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*, Wood was on the fringe of the fringe. Bitten in his teens by the filmmaking bug, Wood was long on ambition and enthusiasm, but

always short on financing and any sort of conventional talent, to put it mildly.

Why is one of the world's best directors making a movie about the life of one of the supposed worst? It was Wood's uphill striving to make his oddball movies in the face of innumerable limitations that so appealed to Burton.

"I really felt close to him," said Burton. "There's something beautiful about somebody who does what they love to do, no matter how misguided, and remains upbeat and optimistic against all odds." Of Wood's films, Burton feels strongly that "there's something poetic about them."

"I grew up watching Ed Wood's movies on television. Like everyone else at first, I remember thinking, 'Wow, what is this?' But then I began to realize that even though they are

bad, they're good."

Burton was lured onto *ED WOOD* not only by the pathos of Wood's relatively short life (Wood died of a heart attack at the age of 53) but by the passion of its screenwriters, Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski. The writing duo had long wanted to write a movie about Wood. At USC Film School, where they first met, Scott Alexander had initially planned to make a documentary about the Z filmmaker, going so far as to prepare a proposal and budget for the project for a class.

"This was in 1983," said Alexander. "My film was going to be called *THE MAN IN THE ANGORA SWEATER* [a reference to Wood's transvestism and his penchant for angora]. I had put this slick proposal together. Part of it was that I had to create letters from people who had worked in Wood's pictures. I remember I included a letter from Lyle Talbot, saying he'd be delighted to cooperate with my project. I don't think anybody in the class, including the teacher, knew who Lyle Talbot was."

Collaborator Larry Karaszewski continued. "We'd always bring up the Ed Wood project. Whenever we hated our lives we'd say we really should write that Ed Wood movie." Apparently, that dire point finally came for the two, as Alexander explained.

"Last year we got very disenchanted with the whole film industry. We'd written the *PROBLEM CHILD* movies. The first script had set out to be

“I really feel close to him. There’s something beautiful about somebody who does what they love to do, no matter how misguided, upbeat against all odds.”



Wood’s celebrated *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* (1959): Milla Nurmi (aka Vampira), wrestler-turned-actor Tor Johnson, Dr. Tom Mason, Wood’s chiropractor and stand-in for the dead Bela Lugosi, and psychic Criswell. Inset: Wrestler George “The Animal” Steel (aka Jim Myers), cast as Tor Johnson in *ED WOOD*.

a comedy for adults, about children. And after the studio development process it wound up a comedy about children for children. We kind of got type-cast writing kiddie films after that, which isn’t something that particularly interested us. I think at one point we got offered the *COP AND A HALF* punch-up job and we just said no, this is enough. We said the hell with them, why don’t we write something we really want to do, just for ourselves. So we wrote a 10-page treatment, which, almost beat-for-beat, will be the movie you’ll eventually see.”

A film school friendship with director Michael Lehman (*HEATHERS*), led to the pair offering Lehman the project. Lehman had just been through his own career debacle of sorts with *HUDSON HAWK* and was interested in making a much smaller film. Noted Karaszewski, “We were all coming

from these very similar experiences. We thought it was kind of funny that the three of us would all team up and make a movie about the ‘Worst Director of All Time.’ We could talk from experience, so to speak.”

Lehman showed the treatment to producer Denise De Novi, with whom he’d made *HEATHERS*. De Novi, having

since gone on to produce for Burton, showed it to her new filmmaking partner, Burton. After that, something unexpected happened.

Said Karaszewski, “Denise hadn’t been too sure what to make of our treatment, so she showed it to Tim. Well, it turned out that Tim was a closet Ed Wood fan. And he flipped for it. And he said he wanted to direct it.”

Sensing Burton’s earnestness, Lehman agreed to bow out as director, taking only an executive producer credit. This, provided Burton agreed to do *ED WOOD* as his very next film. Nobody wanted to see the project deposited upon the Möbius strip of “further development,” where it might become just one of dozens of projects that wanted to woo Burton as director. But there was a conflict, in that

Burton was close to beginning a film for Columbia called *MARY REILLY*, a haunting retelling of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* from the unusual point of view of Dr. Jekyll’s chamber maid. (*MARY REILLY* has since begun production under director Stephen Frears, and will star Julia Roberts.)

Recalled Alexander, “We

were blown away that Tim wanted to do it. But we hadn’t even written the script yet! Tim said if he read a script, and liked it, he’d make it. So we did an incredible rush job and wrote it in six weeks, because there was this ticking clock. Tim was still going to go off and do *MARY REILLY*. So we turned in 147 pages on November 20, 1992. We hadn’t even had the time to cut it down. And on the following Monday Tim called and said, ‘Let’s go make the movie. And we said, ‘What about rewrites?’ Because we never imagined that the 147-page draft would be the shooting script!”

Karaszewski finished the story, “Tim didn’t want to turn the thing into a development process where ten people are saying, ‘Hmmm, do Ed’s movies really have to be bad? Can’t we make him more sympathetic here?’ Tim really saw that the script worked as a piece and wanted to direct it as it was.”

But the route to production wasn’t quite that simple. Though Columbia originally backed Burton on the project, the studio, especially its chief, Mark Canton, hadn’t been all that comfortable with *ED WOOD*. Columbia took the opportunity to bow out when, in early pre-production, Burton decided to take the creatively exciting step of filming in black and white.

Considering Burton’s track record with unusual subject matter, Columbia’s decision may well have been ill-advised. Noted Karaszewski, “It isn’t like someone who makes a ton of ‘commercial’ movies all of a sudden says I wanna make this weird little movie. And in black and white, no less. Every one of Tim’s projects has been a weirdo project and every one of them has made tons and tons of money.” □

Wood (l), Lugosi and cinematographer Bill Thompson on the set of *GLEN OR GLENDA*, Wood’s odd mixture of transvestism and mad scientist movie clichés.



WOLF

By Sheldon Teitelbaum

In *WOLF*, Jack Nicholson portrays Will Randall, a New York book publisher up to his scruffy neck in misfortune. Though his intellect remains sharp, Randall's body has turned to flab and his survival instincts have been dulled by the clutter and rot of life in grungy Gotham. Upstairs, in a neighboring apartment, his wife is brazenly beasting about the foyer with his best friend and protégé, the sleek and stylish Stewart Swinton, played by James Spader. Not content with this treachery, Swinton is also scheming to appropriate Randall's job.

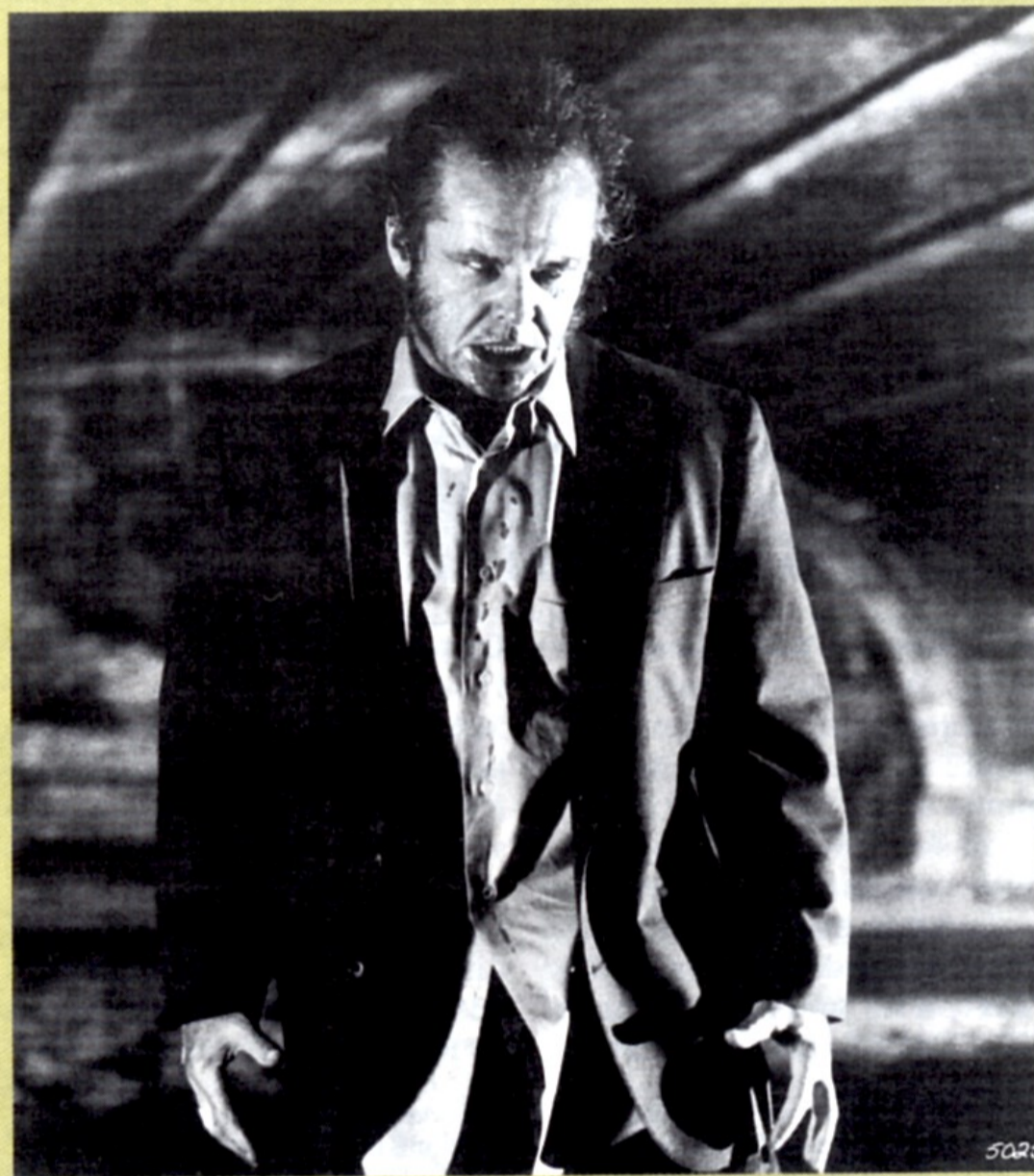
Will Randall is a refined man who prides himself on having rejected Judith Krantz's first manuscript. He still cannot fathom anyone older than 14 ever bothering to read the woman. The firm has been taken over, however, by Raymond Alden, the kind of fellow who would have been proud to propel Howard Stern and Rush Limbaugh on to the cover of *Time*. Portrayed by Christopher Plummer, Alden is unimpressed with Randall's business acumen. Indeed, he has decided to exile him—quite literally—to Romania.

"You could make a case," intones Randall at a cocktail party where he resignedly anticipates personal and professional apocalypse, "that the world has already ended. Certainly that art is dead, that the death of the six million Jews marked the end of art. That no metaphor, nothing of the imagination, could ever compete with that."

Having said this, Nicholson starts turning into a wolf.

It's an unlikely snatch of dialogue for a horror movie. More improbable than the dialogue, though, is the director, Mike Nichols. The Berlin-born filmmaker has achieved renown during the last three decades as a master of urbane sophisticated comedy both in Hollywood (*POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE*, *WORKING GIRL*) and

Mike Nichols directs Jack Nicholson as a werewolf for the '90s.



Wolfman Jack: Nicholson begins to transform in makeup by Rick Baker.

Broadway (*PLAZA SUITE*, *THE REAL THING*). Even with aesthetic or commercial flops like *CATCH 22* and *REGARDING HENRY*, we're not talking John Carpenter.

At first glance, it would be easy to dismiss Nicholson's soliloquy as an aside designed to impress audiences with the movie's weighty concerns. That weight is not negligible—the screenplay was written by Jim

Harrison and doctored by Wesley Strick and Nichol's lifelong partner in comedy, Elaine May. Yet the statement offers key insight both into Nichol's biography, and into his plight as a newcomer to the genre: How can a Holocaust survivor dust off the werewolf myth—a fraying Freudian treatise that has devolved into a hoary metaphor for horny male adolescence—dress it up in adults' clothing,

and set it loose in a world beset by serial killings and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia? Audiences will decide if Nichols has found the answer on June 24, when Columbia Pictures opens *WOLF* nationwide.

For Nichols, the question is neither rhetorical nor academic. The 61-year-old filmmaker was born Michael Igor Peschkowsky in 1931. His maternal grandfather was Jewish-German socialist leader and philosopher Gustav Landauer, a close associate of the Viennese Zionist philosopher Martin Buber. Landauer was also one of the earliest victims of German fascism; in 1919 he was murdered in a Munich street by troops of the reactionary military forces that crushed the fledgling Bavarian socialist state in which he was serving as a minister.

Nichols' father was a German-Russian physician who, in 1939, was able to bring his family to the United States after the signing of the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact enabled Russian passport holders to flee the Nazis. Settling in New York, his father took a new name by shortening the Russian patronymic, Nicholaievich.

Mike Nichols insisted that "the Holocaust was the central fact of my life, and I have always had a sense of living on borrowed time. It's something you never think about, but it's always there."

Although he has never directly confronted the Holocaust in his movies, Nichols has been defying the numbing effect of that event throughout his career. His forte has been comedy. And whether on stage and TV as a badgered wannabe Jewish astronaut opposite Elaine May's pestering mother during the '50s, or in films like *THE GRADUATE* and in Broadway productions of Neil Simon's *BAREFOOT IN THE PARK* and *THE ODD COUPLE*, Nichols has always been able to defy the Holocaust's ravages with laughter and keen social insight.

In *WOLF*, however, Nichols



In an exciting effects sequence, Nicholson runs down, kills and eats a wild deer, a mechanical prop by Amalgamated Dynamics.

faced what, for him, may have been an even more daunting task. As a newcomer to the horror genre, he knew he must acknowledge, if not accede, to certain conventions and expectations. He was not, he acknowledged, another Kubrick, clearly slumming in the genre and intent upon doing away with its tropes.

"I know it's at your own peril that you work against genre modes," said Nichols. "I just kept asking the question, how would this really happen? If this were going to happen, how would it happen physically, how would it affect people?"

Underlying this concern, however, lay a far more pressing question—one that readers of this magazine would do well

Nichols directs Pfeiffer and Nicholson, putting a different spin on the story of a man bitten by a werewolf: Nicholson is a handsome, empowered lycanthrope.



"I know it's at your own peril that you work against genre modes," said Nichols. "I just kept asking the question, how would this really happen?"

to ponder when the gore piles up too high: in a world that held the death camps, how do you keep the idea of a man turning into a wolf from becoming howlingly silly?

"At every point that was my greatest fear—that it would seem ludicrous," acknowledged Nichols. "What we opposed to [this possibility] was what we hope is a sense of, 'My God,

this is really happening.' There's a very strange thing that happened with the movie. Partly it's because Nicholson is a great actor. And partly, it's because our makeup guy, Rick Baker, is a great make up man. Whatever, I think you just accept it. You say, 'Christ, he's changing.'

"You have to keep checking the events [in the movie]. Since it has to be entertaining, one is always pulled toward triumphs and victories. We had to keep checking each event to see whether we were manipulating too much. Or if, one hoped, we were truthful about the inner experience of freeing the animal in yourself, and in depicting the danger and violence of it. We constantly had to check whether the things happening (in the movie) were true to this difficult-to-pin-down inner experience. Or whether we were just dicking around."

Nichols believes that quite apart from his own efforts to

ground the movie in realism, WOLF will succeed in getting audiences to suspend their disbelief in Nicholson's transformation because however preposterous the premise, their eyes will tell them that he is, in fact, transforming. But let's face it. How much disbelief needs suspending to get audiences to imagine Jack Nicholson becoming a wolf? □

Nicholson, wearing an amulet to protect him from his wolfy desires, awakens with wife Michelle Pfeiffer.



THE STAND

A preview of ABC's 8-hour Stephen King horror miniseries.

By Michael Beeler

Stephen King is about to destroy the world. In between commercials for bathroom tissue and lite beer, Samson is going to finally bring the temple crashing down on all of mankind, then gleefully dance upon its grave. And, he's inviting all of us to watch—front row center and free of charge.

THE STAND, King's epic best-selling novel about the struggle between good and evil in a world devastated by a deadly super flu, is coming to a television near you this spring in the form of an ABC television miniseries. King is going to electronically tell us all a long tale "around the corner in the dark" that, at the very least, will cause most of us a bit of paranoia the next time we hear somebody cough and we questioningly whisper to ourselves, "captain trips?"

"THE STAND was particularly fulfilling, because there I got a chance to scrub the whole human race and, man, it was fun," said King in a June 1983 *Playboy* interview. "Sitting at the typewriter, I felt just like Alexander lifting his sword over the Gordian knot and snarling, 'Fuck unraveling it; I'll do it my way!' Much of the

compulsive, driven feeling I had while I worked on THE STAND came from the vicarious thrill of imagining an entire entrenched social order destroyed in one stroke."

The eight-hour miniseries of THE STAND, which ABC television plans to air during the May ratings sweeps period, possibly on four consecutive nights, is the most eagerly awaited film adaptation of any of King's writings. "I think the book has had its fans consistently since it was first published in 1978," said Richard Rubinstein who, along with King, is serving as executive producer. "It was Steve's best-selling backlist book in all the years between the first edition and the republishing in '89 of the second. I think it's cumulatively his best-selling book of all time and that's what is driving this film."

King wrote the over 400-page screenplay for the miniseries himself after repeated attempts by both Rospo Pallenberg and King failed to produce a useable feature-length script. "Steve did not go back to Rospo's screenplay nor did he go back to his own earlier version," said Rubinstein, who also produced King's first produced theatrical screenplay, *CREEP SHOW* in 1982 and his first the-



Makeup effects for THE STAND by Sun Valley's XFX, Inc., a talking corpse (top) in a Flagg-induced nightmare, exhorts Harold Lauder to blow up the committee running Boulder, sculpted by Norman Cabrera, painted by David Dupuis. Below: Sam Anderson as Flagg henchman Whitney Horgan, punished by his demon boss.





Filming *THE STAND* on location in Las Vegas (l to r), *TWILIGHT ZONE* director John Landis, who makes a cameo, director Mick Garris, executive producer Stephen King, makeup artist Bill Corso, Matt Frewer, who plays Trashcan Man, makeup designer Steve Johnson and makeup artist Joel Harlow and David Dupuis.

atrical adaptation of one of his own bestselling novels, *PET SEMATARY* in 1989. "He sat down and inside of four months we turned in to ABC a 420-page official first draft. It was on that basis that ABC, within days of us turning it in, said they would like us to make the miniseries." King ultimately rewrote the script six times before a final screenplay was approved.

According to an ABC representative, the network has ten-

tatively planned to run *THE STAND* in May because they are airing mostly reruns then and it would be great to have eight hours of new programming at that time. Airing earlier in the year, around February or March, would be difficult if they wanted to run it on consecutive nights because the network can't realistically preempt *MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL* or *ROSEANNE*.

The miniseries, which is be-

ing produced by Rubinstein's Laurel Entertainment Productions, a subsidiary of Spelling Entertainment Group, Inc., was directed by Mick Garris, who also directed King's first original screenplay *SLEEPWALKERS*. It was filmed over an almost six-month period, mostly on location, in Salt Lake City, New York City and Las Vegas. Salt Lake City was reportedly used in place of the book's Boulder location largely due to the producers not wanting to film in Colorado, a state that is perceived by many in the film industry to have anti-gay laws.

Although Laurel Entertainment was unwilling to comment on the budget and eventual expenditures of making *THE STAND*, industry scuttlebutt suggests that Laurel "lost its shirt" financing the miniseries because ABC was not covering all the costs of the production. But, because Laurel is owned by parent company Blockbuster Video and because one of its subsidiaries is Worldvision Enterprise, Inc., which will license the miniseries in-

ternationally, it is widely believed that the profit for this epic will ultimately be realized in its subsequent release on home video and in worldwide distribution.

Principal photography began in Utah in February 1993, where the crew began their endurance run with bad weather, good skiing and culture shock. "Basically a film that shoots for five months is going to run into bad weather

Media critic Joe Bob Briggs in his cameo as State Patrol Officer Joe Bob Brentwick, plague makeup by Corso.

James Sheridan as Flagg, the demonic force of King's story, undergoing makeup application by Corso (l) and Sun Valley-based XFX designer Steve Johnson.





THE BOOK VS. THE MINISERIES

Stephen King adapted his own horror bestseller.

By Michael Beeler

Thirteen years ago, about the time that Stephen King bought the 23-room, 129-year-old house in Bangor, Maine that he and his family now live in, producer Richard Rubinstein and director George Romero paid King a visit, that ultimately resulted in *THE STAND* becoming a movie. "We were up there visiting and getting to know Steve," said Rubinstein. "Steve basically said, 'These are the books on my shelf, that have not been acquired by anyone, in terms of adapting them. Which

King scripted his own novel, but directing is Mick Garris, who filmed *SLEEPWALKERS*, a King misfire.

one would you like to do?' And, *THE STAND* jumped off the shelf. Literally. We have been trying, very diligently, ever since to find the right home and the right medium to do it."

The right medium, after many false starts to produce a feature-length theatrical release, eventually turned out to be an eight-hour miniseries for ABC television. A miniseries format was decided upon when it became clear to King and Rubinstein, that maybe a miniseries was the only place where an epic of this size could be told effectively, with respect to both the characters and plot.

"These characters were so clear and the book did so much of the homework for a lot of us, that you wanted to be as passionate as the book was," said Adam Storke (*DEATH BECOMES HER*, *LIFEPOD*), who plays singer-songwriter Larry Underwood in the movie. "I think people really cared about that and brought that to the piece. There were many days where you'd be [thinking], 'Well, in the book it said!' And, you had to realize, well, it's not the book. But, because there's so much allegory and spirituality in the book, you wanted to bring that to the miniseries. Many times, there was just not enough time or room for that, so you had to do it very subtly and find your own spots where you wanted it to come out. Also, because the piece is so long, you had to be clear about tracking your own



Flagg's incarnation as a demon scarecrow on the miniseries' second night, a cornfield vision to frighten Mother Abigail, makeup by Johnson and Joel Harlow.

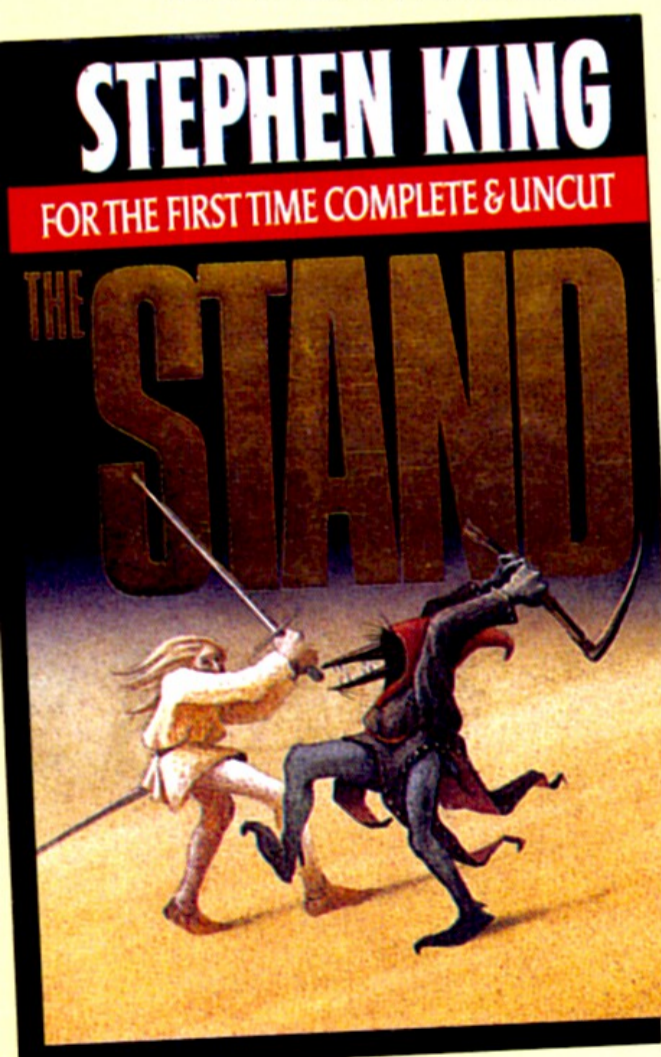
journey and not getting waylaid by the other stories that were going on."

Overall, the miniseries holds true to the book except that some of the backstory on the main characters has been dropped, a number of lesser characters have been eliminated all together, there is almost no foul language and a few changes were made to the storyline so that it would flow more smoothly in a television format. Also, the time frame of the movie has been updated to reflect the '90s rather than the late '70s. Each night of the miniseries will have a different title, and theme.

The first night is entitled "The Plague," following the story from the Government Reservation, where the virus is accidentally released, to the point where the plague has pretty much run its course and Stu Redman, the steadfast hero

played by Gary Sinise (*OF MICE AND MEN*), gets free from the Stovington Disease Control Center and begins the journey to Mother Abigail, the 108-year-old beacon of goodness played by Ruby Dee (*ROOTS*). Randall Flagg, as both the crow and the evil protagonist played by Jamey Sheridan, and the Monster-Shouter, the New York doomsayer played by Kareem Abdul Jabaar (the former Lakers basketball superstar, who, in association with Rubinstein, will produce a series of TV movies in the future), are featured more prominently in the first night than they were in the beginning of the book.

Other head cast members from the over 120 speaking roles include: Molly Ringwald (*PRETTY IN PINK*) as the pregnant Franjie Goldsmith, Rob Lowe (*BAD INFLUENCE*, *MASQUERADE*) as



UNDERWOOD'S QUEST

“The book did so much of the homework for us that you wanted to be as passionate as the book was,” said actor Adam Storke. “Many times there wasn’t time for that.”

deaf mute Nick Andros, Laura San Giacomo (SEX, LIES AND VIDEO TAPE) as the sultry Nadine and Matt Frewer (MAX HEADROOM) as pyromaniac Trashcan Man. Joe Bob Briggs (JOE BOB BRIGGS' DRIVE-IN THEATRE on The Movie Channel) plays a small part as Joe Bob Brentwick, the State Patrol Officer in Arnette, Texas. King plays Teddy Weizak, one of the guys in the dead body removal crew in Boulder. There will also be a number of other cameo appearances throughout the miniseries.

The second night, entitled “The Dreams,” follows the journey of the survivors of the Plague, as they are guided by their dreams to either Mother Abigail or Flagg. Harold Lauder, although established in the first night as a beginning writer, does not keep a journal regularly in the movie as he did in the book. Rita Blake-moor, the pill-popping-rich-bitch who Larry Underwood meets in New York in the book, has been dropped from the movie. Instead, Larry will meet up prematurely with Nadine, who has taken on some of Rita’s characteristics, and she will accompany him through the infamous Lincoln Tunnel scene.

“They combined characters to tighten up the script,” said Storke, a native New Yorker, who saw his character as a kind of Bruce Springsteen before Nautalis. “It actually works quite well because of the relationship between Nadine and Larry. They’re pretty much the first people they see who aren’t ill when the apocalypse happens and that, in itself, causes a very interesting relationship. Not only do they start to love each other, but they also realize, they really need each other to survive, which also happened in the book, but it’s easier to follow this way.”

The wolves of the book have been replaced with rats in the movie and the entire back story of The Kid meeting up with Trashcan Man has been dropped. The night will end with an almost biblical image of a convoy of vehicles making their way to Boulder, Colorado, the city of new beginnings.

The third night, entitled



Ruby Dee in old-age makeup as Mother Abigail with makeup artist Steve Johnson.

“The Betrayal,” opens with Trashcan Man’s approach to Las Vegas, the highly efficient, totalitarian center of evil, run by Flagg. The distinct differences between the two encampments of mankind will be highlighted, as each group begins to move strategically against the other. Unlike the book, the electrical power will be restored the first time the turbines are switched back on in Boulder. The end of the evening will mark the beginning of the pilgrimage of Stu, Larry, Ralph Brentner and Glen Bateman to the City of Sin.

And finally, the last night, entitled “The Stand,” presents the explosive confrontation between good and evil: the unraveling of Flagg’s sinister world and the triumph of the enduring human values of courage, kindness, friendship and love.

“It was very intense,” said Storke, who spent four days during the filming in Las Vegas on a cross while 600 extras screamed for his death. “We would stay up there on that

cross, pretty much all night and try not to come down. Kind of just enjoy the horror of it. You got a lot of people screaming for your blood and you’ve got Jamey, who plays Flagg and Miguel [Ferrer], who plays his side kick Lloyd, and everyone’s fighting for their space. Literally! It’s very dramatic. It should be spectacular. And, very sad. People are dying, so other people can live. This is what martyrs are made of. Reluctant ones at that.”

“I’d say that we were able to stay closer to the book than we would have if we were making a two-and-a-half-hour feature,” concluded Rubinstein. “I think we could by degree be more literal working in the miniseries format because we had a six-and-a-half-hour movie [when you take the commercials out] to make. So we could leave out less but we still—and I think Steve would confirm this—had things that he had to make decisions about either representing in some other fashion or condensing.” □

anywhere,” said Steve Johnson, who, as head of Steve Johnson’s XFX, Inc., supervised the series’ special makeup effects. “But, the only way the weather impacted the film is that we went nuts skiing every weekend. We had a blast! A little fool-hearty, since none of us were good skiers. Although we are now.

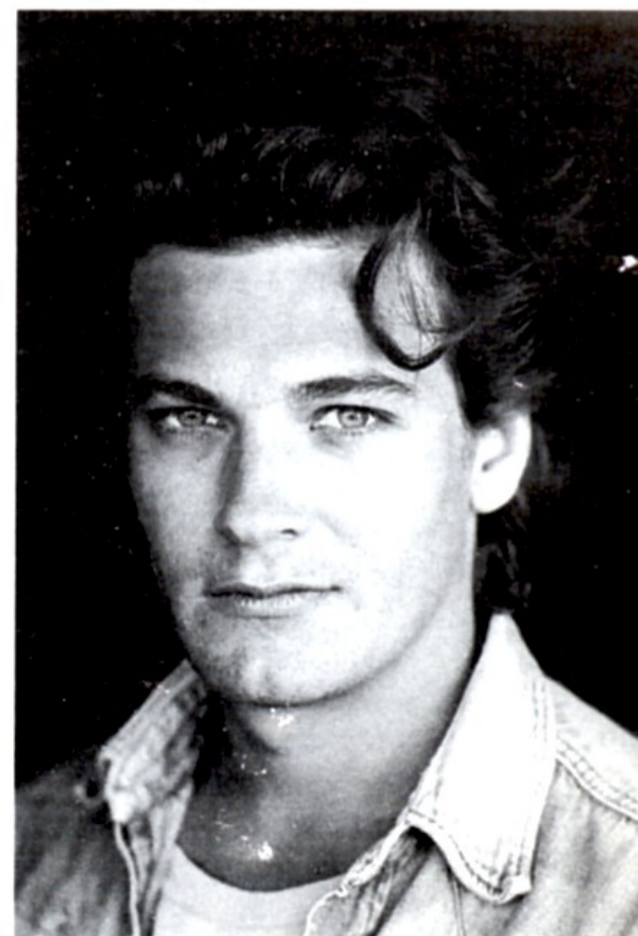
“We were in Salt Lake City, which is so quiet and so conservative; and then, after four months we were picked up and thrown in Vegas, a night shoot with our trailers literally parked at the intersection of the biggest casino street on earth. You’re like two steps out and you’re at the casino. We went from the two opposite ends of the earth and it was hard to contain the crew at that point because everyone was ‘slap-happy.’ I mean, five months is a long shoot.”

Johnson and his effects crew were responsible for developing, building and implementing the makeup, prosthetics and animatronics effects of THE STAND. They built, among other things, 60 dummies to represent the dead victims of the plague, a number of demon versions of Flagg, old age makeup for Mother Abigail, burn makeup for Trashcan Man and electrostatically charged facial hair for the male cast members.

“A lot of names were bantered about as to who was going to play Flagg,” said Johnson.

continued on page 14

Adam Storke (HIGHWAY TO HELL) plays MTV rocker Larry Underwood, on a quest in plague-ravaged America.





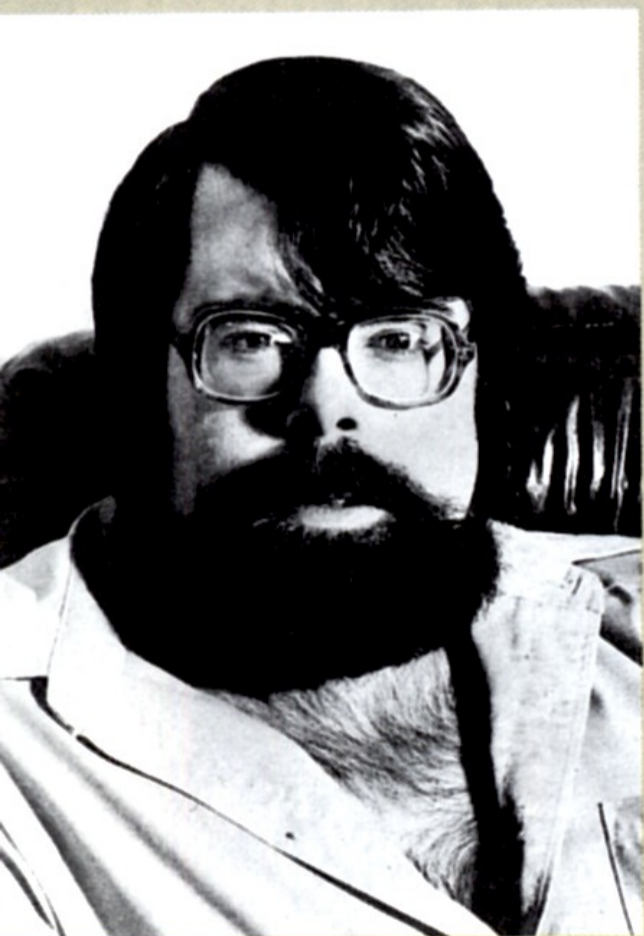
THE HORROR MEISTER

A look at Stephen King's success as the master of the horror bestseller.

By Michael Beeler

Most of us have very vivid childhood memories of dark nights when there were monsters under the bed and bogeymen in the closet. It was a time when we believed in the absolute power of a flashlight beam to vanquish the demons of the night back into their eternal hell, down the stairs, behind the door, inside the bars of the cage. But we knew the bars of the cage were not strong enough, and, given the fight circumstances, such as after a night watching scary movies with our big brother, those monsters could break free from the cage, open the door, climb the stairs and once again come looking for us. The fears were real, as

King, in his Ernest Hemingway look-alike period, 1982. Critical recognition has eluded the novelist.



High school graduate, 1966. King published his first story, "I Was A Teenage Graverobber," in 1967.

were the monsters.

This is where Stephen King lives: inside the dark reaches of our childhood fears.

As most of us grew up and became rational, thinking adults, we learned to make the bars on the monster's cage stronger, to ensure the monster never gets out again. But King has always taken great delight in actually making the bars a little more rickety and every now and then leaving the door unlocked, when the night is dark and the wind howls outside the window. And he loves it when we join him, not only facing our childhood fears but learning to actually embrace them, because the fact of the matter is, many of us love it when the monster comes through the door.

King could have grown up to be almost anyone or anything. Had the winds been blowing another direction on a particular day, his life might have turned out much different than it did.

It's not too hard to imagine him in black leather, plugged into a wall of Marshall amps, belting out the high-voltage chords and lyrics of "Armageddon Now" to throngs of Neo-Nazis. He could have very easily ended up on top of some clock tower with a deer rifle and superscope helping God sort out the "bad eggs." And it's probably safe to say he would have made a great English teacher. Although one can imagine he would have been in constant hot water for exposing his students to the kind of books that are not considered acceptable to the white-washed, grave mentality of the local PTA.

As it was, something along the way touched King's life so that he eventually wound up at the door waiting for the monster. Maybe it happened at the age of four, when a friend he had been playing with was run over by a freight train and the authorities picked up his pieces in a wicker basket. It could have possibly taken root during all those nights he and his grandfather sat listening to old radio shows such as *SUSPENSE*, *DIMENSION X* and *THE SHADOW*. Maybe he caught the bug in 1954 while watching *THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON* from the back seat of a Buick, at a drive-in theatre, while his brother slept beside him.

But chances are he became hooked forever on the macabre at the age of 12 when he and his brother, David, found a box of old 1940s Avon paperbacks on fantasy and science fiction in the attic. The box, which belonged to his father, who had



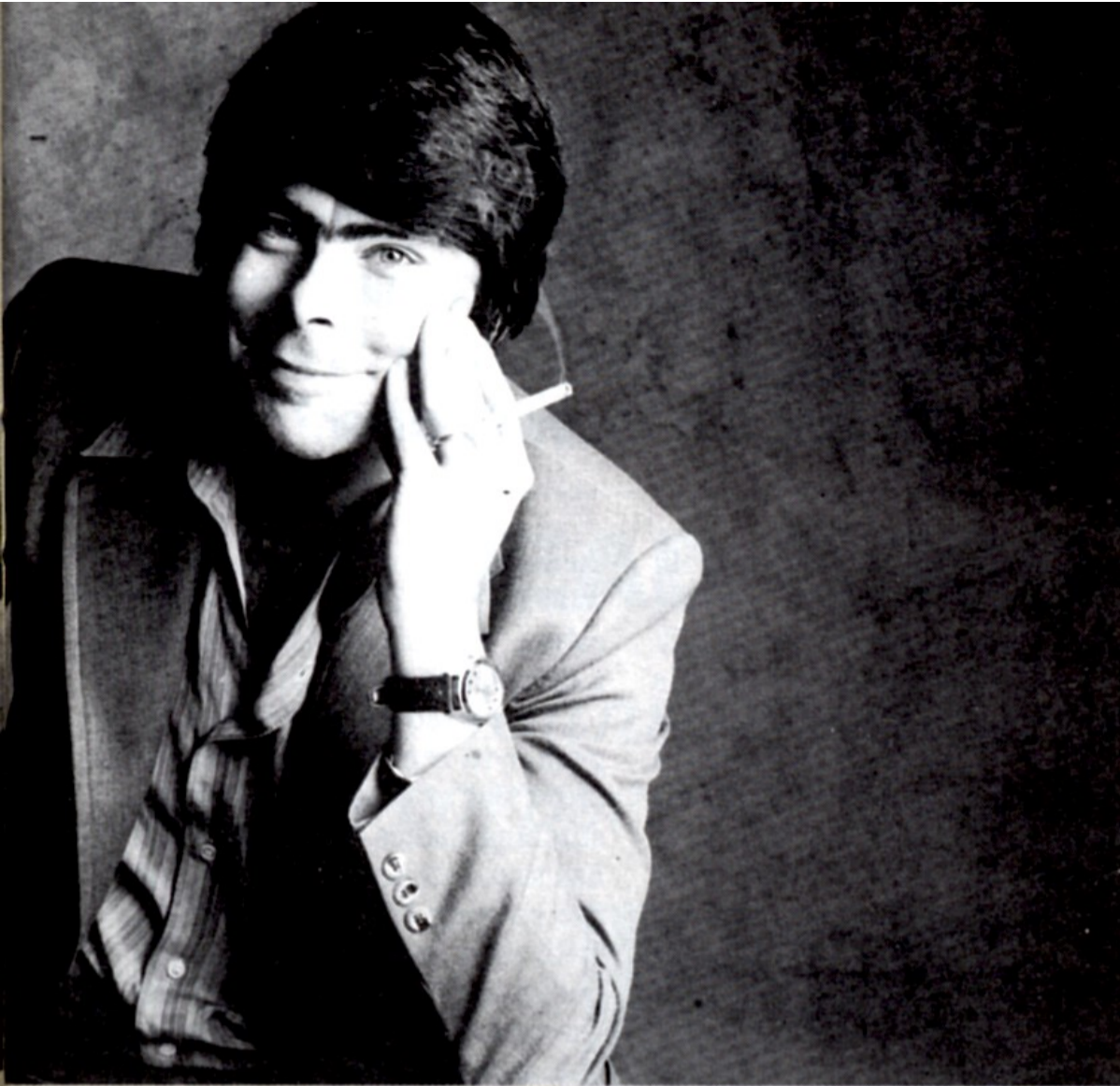
The many faces of Stephen King.

abandoned the family in 1949 when King was two, also contained *The Lurking Fear and Other Stories*, a 1947 collection of H.P. Lovecraft's work.

And although this was not his first exposure to horror, the chance find of Lovecraft's book was as King later wrote, "my first encounter with serious fantasy-horror fiction."

Radio, books, movies, E.C. Comics and the emotions of youth all provided fuel to the fire that had begun to burn inside of King. While still in his teens he began submitting stories to magazines, which resulted mostly in rejection slips. It was a difficult time in his life. He was a fat kid in hand-me-down clothes, somewhat of an outcast, who was poorly coordinated and always picked last when they chose teams in high school.

In many ways, the character of Harold Lauder in *THE STAND* mirrors King as a young, budding writer caught between the awkwardness of youth and the contained violent rage of a young man who has grown impatient with a world that still sees him as just another pimply-faced kid. During Harold's death scene in both the book and the movie, when he writes in his journal, just before he dies, "I'm sorry, I was misled," it's difficult not to speculate that King might be asking for forgiveness for possibly be-



In his early Rod Serling look-alike phase, 1978. Serling was a big influence.

ing seduced by all the power and glory that helped create the phenomenon he is today.

Although his eventual success did not come easily or without sacrifice, it did seem to happen almost overnight. *Carrie*, which King thought had very little chance of a sale, was the first novel of his to be published. It was written by him on his wife's Olivetti portable typewriter while sitting at a child-size school desk in the cramped furnace room of a trailer where he and his family lived. At the time, he was struggling to make ends meet while working as a high school English teacher, drinking too much and fighting constantly with his wife, Tabitha. Doubleday paid him an advance against royal-

ties of \$2500 for the hardback and later New American Library came forward and paid him almost a quarter of a million dollars for the rights to publish it as a paperback. King was, definitely, on his way.

"Doubleday had purchased *Carrie* for a small advance," wrote Harlan Ellison in *Harlan Ellison's Watching*. "It was, in the corporate cosmos, just another mid-list title, a spooky story to be marketed without much foofaraw among the first novels, the '*Learn to Love Your Brown Rice and Get Svelte Things in 30 Minutes*' offerings, the books one finds in the knockoff catalogues nine months later at \$1.49 plus a free shopping bag. But King's editor read that opening sequence in

Sharing the joys of moviemaking with young son Joe on the set of *CREEPSHOW* in 1981. King's son, now grown, worked with his father on filming *THE STAND*.



THE HORROR GAME

"King lives inside the dark reaches of our childhood fears. We join him in facing those fears, embracing them because we love it when the monster comes to our door."

which the telekinetic, Carrie White, gets her first menstrual experience before the eyes of a covey of teenage shrieks, and more than the lightbulb in the locker room exploded. Xeroxes of the manuscript were run off; they were disseminated widely in-house; women editors passed them on to female secretaries, who took them home and gave them to their friends. That first scene bit hard. It was the essence of the secret of Stephen King's phenomenal success: the everyday experience raised to the mythic level by the application of fantasy to a potent cultural trope. It was the commonly shared horrible memory of half the population, reinterpreted. It was the flash of recognition, the miracle of that rare instant in which readers, dulled by years of reading artful lies, felt their skin stretched tight by an encounter with artful truth."

Over 80 million books and almost 30 films later, King is still going strong. His name has literally become synonymous with the horror genre. And through it all, those that know him and work with him say he's still a pretty nice guy.

"He was very accessible, amiable, interesting, eccentric and a lot of fun to be around," said actor Adam Storke, about working with King on *THE STAND*. "He's someone who still holds on to a large amount of youth. He loves stories, movies, rock and roll, is unpredictable in his appearance and is very bright. He's made quite a success for himself, yet is still an accessible, intelligent, funny human being and he doesn't seem to be tainted by it all. He's still just a fan like anyone else."

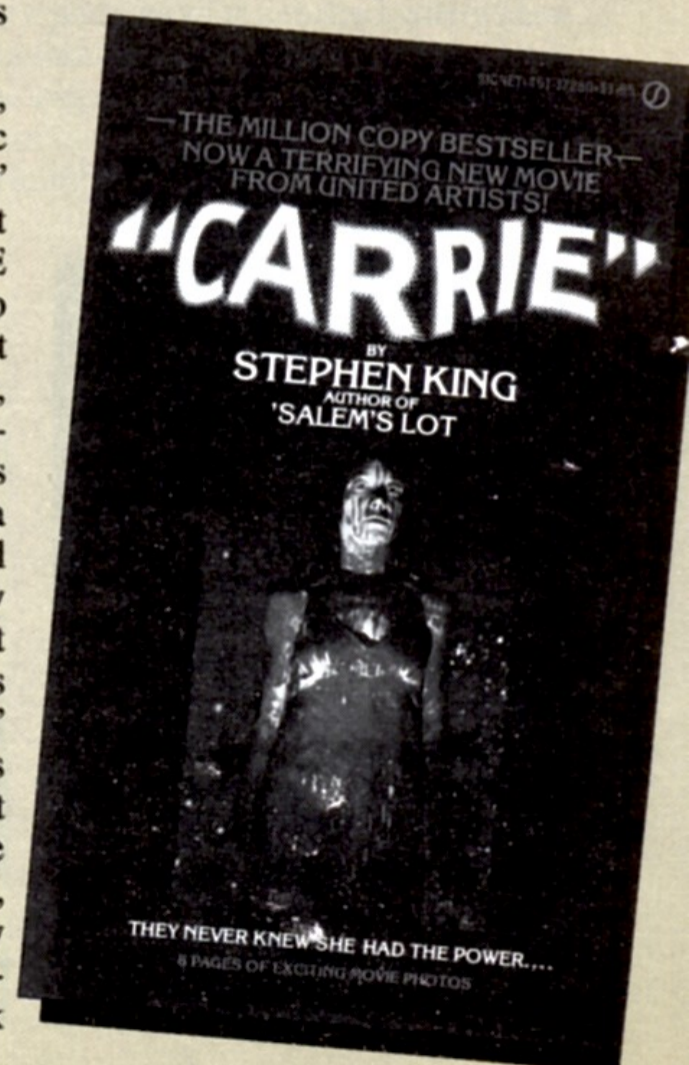
King takes a lot of shots from everyone concerning what he should be, what he could be and what he never will be. But, in many ways, he's never really changed. He is still that wide-eyed little kid sitting in the back

seat of a Buick at the drive-in watching the monster approaching the door. Fascinated with the terror and ultimately the dance with death itself.

"The danse macabre is a waltz with death," wrote King in *Danse Macabre*. "This is a truth we cannot afford to shy away from. Like the rides in the amusement park mimic violent death, the tale of horror is a chance to examine what's going on behind doors which we usually keep double-locked. Yet the human imagination is not content with licked doors. Somewhere there is another dancing partner, the imagination whispers in the night—a partner in a rotting ball gown, a partner with empty eyesockets, green mold growing on her elbow-length gloves, maggots squirming in the thin remains of her hair. To hold such a creature in our arms? Who, you ask me, would be so mad? Well...?"

Well, Hawk, on some nights, maybe us all. □

Director Brian DePalma invented King as horror icon. The success of the 1975 film made King's reputation.





Kareem Abdul Jabaar as the Monster Shouter, a beefed-up part as the New York derelict who forsees the plague and the rise of Flagg, makeup by Bill Corso.

“Most of the names were who you would expect if you’re familiar with the story: David Bowie, James Woods and the guy who played the robot in ALIEN, Lance Henrickson. But [director] Mick [Garris] went a bit against normal kinds of view points in casting. I was surprised at some of his choices and then pleasantly surprised at how well they worked out.”

According to Johnson, the initial difficulty they had with the short-haired James Sheridan as Flagg was overcoming his clean-cut image. “He’s so used to playing good guys. He’s always the father. It was like what were we going to do with him to make him evil? One sug-

Makeup artist Bill Corso’s original design for the Trashcan Man, the scarred dabbler in atomic bombs.



gestion I had on the outset was to give him more hair, at least. That’s not necessarily an evil attribute; but, I thought it would take some of the soft edge off of him. So he always appears with a really nice wig we had made. On top of that, he appears in several different versions of a demon.”

One of the versions was along the lines of what might be considered a standard or traditional concept of what evil in human form would be. Something of a cross between a man and a goat with bizarre and sort of twisted ram horns made out of translucent material that glow when they’re backlit.

Johnson’s XFX also developed a number of effects for Flagg’s hands, such as lengthening his third finger, which, according to Johnson, is supposedly the sign of the devil. “There’s a scene where as scripted Jamey’s in the cornfield and he appears to Mother Abigail on her porch and he says, ‘Your blood is in my fist,’ then he raises his fist and clenches it and blood strains out of it. But I thought it might be more interesting to have him just raise his palm and have blood begin to sweat out of his palm and then clench it. Kind of like a stigmata kind of thing, since the story really does have a lot of religious overtones. Mick loved the idea, so we did it.

“We tried to keep a motif almost of weird things happening with his hands. We have a really neat trick where he does this

JUST FOR THE BIRDS

“I tried to talk [director] Mick [Garris] out of the [Flagg] scarecrow makeup,” said makeup designer Steve Johnson. “I never really liked it in the book, either.”

kind of magical trick with a coin at one point when he’s getting one of the characters out of jail. He walks the coin across his knuckles and it becomes an amulet. Then he puts it on the back of one hand and all of his fingers magically bend backwards and cup it as though his hand was palm up. You just see it for a split second and you’re not sure whether what you saw is real or not. All we did was a real simple trick. We made an appliance for another person to come up out of camera so their palm would look like the back of a hand. So actually what you are doing is placing it in a palm and it bends naturally. But you don’t get that when you see it on film. It’s a real nice illusion.”

Johnson also developed another demon version of Flagg that appears as a rotted out, evil-looking kind of scarecrow for a number of the cornfield scenes in the movie. “The goat demon is interesting,” said Johnson. “It’s real disturbing and it’s a very classic image but it’s not my favorite, actually. My favorite one’s the scarecrow makeup even though, at first, I tried to talk Mick out of it because I thought the scarecrow makeup seemed kind of silly. I actually never really liked it in

the book either. But we came up with a way to make it look interesting. We just envisioned it as a completely rotted thing.”

They used fabric stitched together to represent the scarecrow’s skin. The pattern of the stitching makes it appear as if it has scars all across its face that are coming apart at the seams with dust and sawdust falling out whenever it speaks. The first time you see the scarecrow in the movie, its rotted lips are sewn shut until it smiles and then the stitches break loose.

“There’s a silhouette shot of Jamey in his scarecrow makeup in a cornfield,” said Johnson. “The sky’s lit up really creepy. It’s a real eerie scene. And all you see of the face is its outline. He’s standing like a scarecrow and then he starts to talk and his eyes glow. Then, when he opens his mouth, there’s actually a light emitting from his mouth that is the same color of light as his eyes.”

To achieve this effect Johnson used the glowing full contact lens they developed for John Landis’ INNOCENT BLOOD and a dental appliance concept they borrowed from Mark Setraikien, who works a lot with Rick Baker. Setraikien developed the appliance for a Halloween gag where he had a

Steve Johnson (l) and Bill Corso apply a pregnancy makeup to Molly Ringwald as Frannie Goldsmith, who gives birth at the end to the first baby since the plague.





DEAD BODIES

Steve Johnson's XFX came up with corpses for King's plague.

By Michael Beeler

In order to capture the feel of an apocalyptic world ravaged by a deadly super flu, Steve Johnson's XFX, Inc. literally created a world of dead bodies. Johnson got his start in makeup, prosthetics and animatronics effects on films like *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON* and has gone on to work on such notable films as *THE ABYSS*, *GHOST-BUSTERS* and *BATMAN RETURNS*.

"The basis of the story is that the earth has perished," said Johnson. "99% of the population has died from a super flu epidemic, so we had to illustrate this. From the onset, I didn't want to have 100 extras in makeup because that would have been an application nightmare. What we eventually agreed upon was to create 60 dummies to represent the dead bodies."

Building the dummies, which was coordinated by Joel Harlow, turned out to be a monumental task in itself, due to the tight work space of Johnson's modest effects shop in Sun Valley, California, and the need to create a wide variety of dummies of all ages, genders, races and stages of deterioration. Some of the dummies were created using body molds from previous films the shop had worked on.

"I've got three storage units filled with the molds of every actor I've ever worked with and I've worked with a lot of famous people," said Johnson. "I'd have to be stupid not to take advantage of that. None of the actors actually know we did this so to avoid lawsuits we did



The results of the flu that decimates America, plague victim makeup by Joel Harlow.

what we could to change and disguise them. In fact, if I wasn't saying this, I don't think anyone would recognize anything. If you look at the film closely, you'll see a lot of famous people lying dead in the background. But in the context of the film, it's not going to be noticeable to most of the audience."

A number of inside jokes were created by the crew, using some of the famous dummy molds in various dead body scenes.

Stephen King picked the one they used for Trask, the dead inmate that Lloyd starts chomping on while trapped in his prison cell during the second night of the miniseries. "[Producer] Richard Rubinstein made me promise not to tell anybody who the person is, but it's a funny story," said Johnson. "It was our main dead guy, since Lloyd is actually dragging him and trying to eat him. You see the dummy a lot, including a close-up of the face yanked against the bars. You still may not recognize him in

Johnson (c) surrounded by the makeup crew of *THE STAND* and their handiwork.



A signpost on the way to Las Vegas, dotted with the crucified bodies of survivors who broke the laws of Flagg's regime, drug addict corpse by Joel Harlow.

the film because of the way we finished it off, with different hair and paint."

To get molds to create the rest of the dead dummies, Johnson used people off the streets of Los Angeles. "Since we needed so many ethnic types and ages we put an ad in the paper," he said. "It stated, that in return for a two-hour life casting session, to be used for the ABC miniseries *THE STAND*, we would give [participants] a copy of their head. We got all kinds of calls, but we still weren't getting enough of the right types of people. We needed everything: Orientals, Blacks, Mexicans, thin people, old people and heavy people." To get the variety they needed, one of the sculptors changed a couple of the molds from one race to another.

Most of the dummies were used over and over again throughout the film, by changing them cosmetically each time they were shown. One was even turned into an Elvis impersonator, while on location in Las Vegas.

According to Johnson, there's a good chance you'll see these dummies of his for a long time after you've seen *THE STAND*. "Every dummy we made is capable of being shot close up. They turned out quite well. I've got 60 dead people, every single type you could want, from one day dead to six months dead. I've been getting calls like crazy. It's like a shopping mart. Whatever you want, I've got. We've already rented some to several other movies." □



WORKING WITH STEPHEN KING

Collaborating with the master on the filming of his horror masterpiece.

By Michael Beeler

Some see him as the Edgar Allan Poe of our generation: the man who has successfully brought the horror genre to main street America. Some say, while his earlier stuff was pretty good, his more recent stuff sounds as if he has grown tired and has run out of ideas. And, still others simply regard him as the Great American Hack: nothing more than a glorified literary fry cook serving up an endless stream of reheated McHorror and fries to a dullard public,

A victim of the flu that decimates humanity, biological weapons research that goes awry, makeup by Johnson.



that wouldn't know a horror classic if it bit them in the neck.

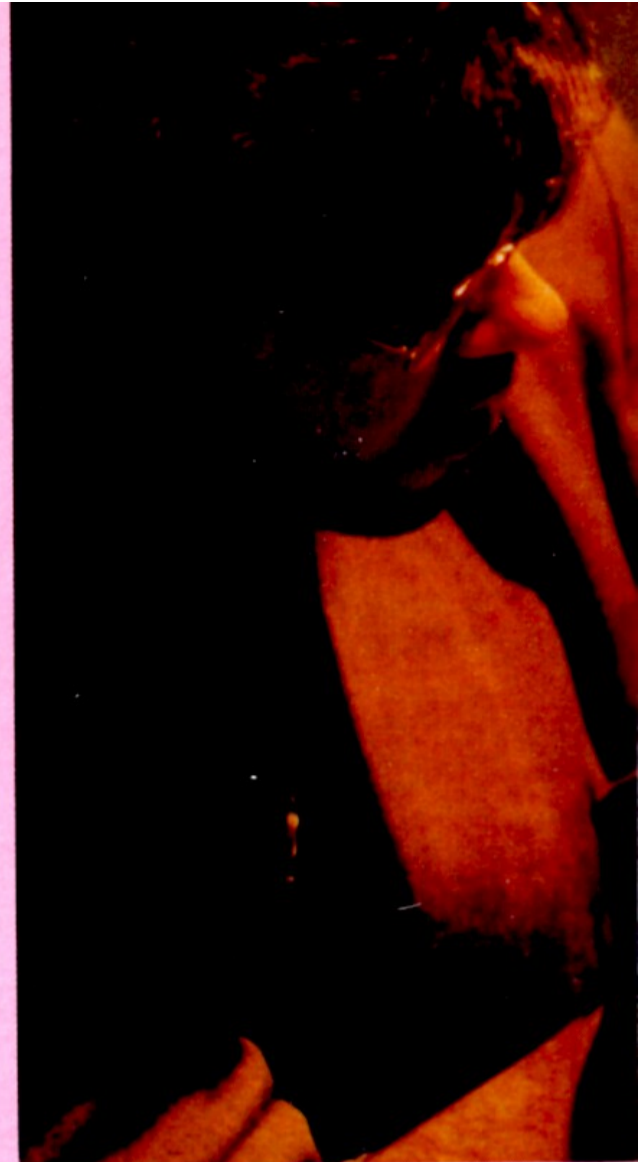
But, regardless of how you see him, he is King. People mob him wherever he goes. He is the bestselling author in history, reportedly making over \$10 million a novel, not counting movie rights and possible script fees. A lot of critics who love to hate him and trash his books and movies, will literally start to drool at the mere mention of the possibility of a live interview with him. And, while he would even admit some of his work leaves something to be desired, the bottom line is, he has written a number of spine-tingling classics that have absolutely scared the shit out of us.

For Steve Johnson, the young, energetic and very articulate FX expert of XFX, Inc., working with Stephen King was the most interesting aspect of doing the special makeup effects for *THE STAND*. "It was a dream come true to work with Stephen because this is my all time favorite book of his and it's also his dream project," said Johnson. "From what I gather, he's wanted to make this film for years and years and years. It finally came about. He executive produced it, wrote the script himself and he was on the set all the time. It was really just a fantastic experience.

"I just wanted to do the best possible job I could because I really wanted to do justice to the material. And I wanted to make Stephen happy because he's made me so happy with all

of his work. So we just kicked ass on this job. We did everything we could to make certain that every aspect of everything we touched was perfect. And I have to say that it's probably one of the cleanest shows that's ever come out of the shop for that reason."

While working at the Utah State Prison, Johnson, who started reading King novels 12 years ago when he was working on *GREYSTOKE*, got the chance to impress King with his special brand of prosthetics effects magic. "We set a scenario for almost 14 or 16 cells that had dead bodies in them," said Johnson. "Joe, Stephen's 21-year-old son, who worked with us on the film, was really interested in making it work. So rather than just setting the bodies up to look good aesthetically, Joe was actually coming up with story points—'this guy is



Making up James Sheridan as Flagg.

trying to get out his window, this guy died when he was vomiting on his toilet.' He'd come up with ideas. He suggested if they had the flu there would be snotty bloodied tissues all over the place. It was really good to have an extension of Stephen work with us to set this stuff up. That was basically what it was like, working with Joe."

Originally, on the first day of the shoot, Johnson and his crew thought they were housed in an unused wing of the prison because there were no inmates around when they arrived at six in the morning. "The more we worked in the cells I started thinking, 'These art directors are doing a damn good job, look there's a plastic sandwich in a baggie, what a good touch.'

King, Rubinstein and director Mick Garris in Utah last February. What was it like working with King on the set each day?—Garris declined to be interviewed.





Steve Johnson puts contact lenses on the demon, designed by Norman Cabrera.

They even put up pin up posters and all kinds of stuff. And the more we worked in it the more we realized they did too good of a job. It turned out that they had moved, physically moved, the entire sex offender wing of the prison, most of who were infuriated that they couldn't have their cells for the two or three days we were shooting."

Before Johnson's crew realized they were working in cells that belonged to prisoners, they had moved all sorts of shoes, blankets and stuff from one cell to another mixing and matching things for the aesthetics of the shoot. By the end of the day they were unable to remember exactly what they had moved. The next morning every cell had a note in it," recalled John-

son, "saying 'Don't touch my goddamn stuff—you bastards are in my house!' Other notes were from people who were in heaven that Stephen King was there and they were begging for autographs. There were some weird ones like one guy who asked, 'Steve, prove you're real, sign this.'"

When King came in that morning Johnson let him know about all the notes in the cells. "I said, 'there's an awful lot of people in there that want your autograph!' And Stephen doesn't like that sort of thing. Understandably so because he's mobbed everywhere he goes. But, he went back in and he signed them. The one that said prove you're real, he signed, 'I'm real—Stephen King.'" □

Bill Corso touches up his design for Trashcan Man stage 3 on a puppet of Matt Frewer, progressively scarred on his way to igniting the big bomb.



MINISERIES AUTEUR

“THE STAND is Stephen King’s ‘dream project,’” noted makeup supervisor Steve Johnson. **“He’s wanted to make this film for years and was on the set all the time.”**

palate made that clipped on the inside of his mouth with a very bright LED in it. When it is used in a dim-lit situation it looks like light is shooting out of your mouth. The appliance was fitted to Sheridan's mouth with wires going under his makeup, so when he talks, you not only see his eyes glow but you also see a light coming from his mouth.

“For the hair we came up with all kinds of things,” said Johnson. “I thought maybe we should have mushrooms growing in and around him—or moss, or even flowers. But what we ended up with, which looked the creepiest, were roots. Literally muddy, twisted roots growing out of his head to make long hair to match the length he wore for the normal character. I also wanted to have in the close-up shots earthworms crawling in and around his hair. Maybe cockroaches. But Jamey wasn't too up for that. We did test it. But it didn't work out too well.”

What didn't work out well was when they put the earthworms on Sheridan's head he freaked and screamed that they were crawling into his ears. Which wasn't really possible because there was fabric covering them. An effects guy drew a really funny cartoon of Sheridan running from a demon earthworm chasing him with a chainsaw. “It's understandable that an actor may not want to have live creatures crawling around his head,” added Johnson. “It probably wouldn't have read on film anyway.”

In order to present a sort of hygienically, laid-back, post-apocalyptic world, where shaving every day is not very high on anyone's list of priorities, Johnson came up with a process that would make it appear as if the men actually had stubble growing out of their faces. The process, although not new, was

never used on such a grand scale of living, breathing actors as it was on the set of THE STAND. “What we did with Camille Calvetty, who handled straight makeup, was perfect a technique of actually electrostatically flocking hair,” said Johnson, “which is a technique where you have to ground the actor, because you're using an electric charger, put adhesive on the face, chop the hair to the right length and put it in a device that charges the hair with a static electrical charge and then shoots it out of a wand. The hair sticks as though it's growing out of the skin. It's amazing and reads well on film. All the male principals always had stubble at whatever length it should be.

Ultimately, according to Johnson, the real problem was maintaining it once it had been applied to the actors. “When you do it on an actor there are different considerations to take in to account, such as the other make-

Not Method: actor Patrick Kilpatrick flashes a smile in Bill Corso's first-stage flu makeup as Ray Booth.





James Sheridan as Randall Flagg the despotic leader of post-holocaust Las Vegas, flashing a demonic smile, courtesy of makeup by Sun Valley's XFX, Inc.

up, the loose hair and the adhesive which everything sticks to. You don't have a lot of control. So it takes an incredible amount of maintenance and a lot of patience to keep it looking good. We developed it in conjunction with Camille. I wouldn't have suggested she try it out on such a big project. But she had the guts to do it, along with her husband Reese, and I'm pleased she did because it worked really well."

In developing the makeup for Trashcan Man, the retarded pyromaniac who delights in blowing things up in an unoccupied world filled with unguarded combustible objects, both Johnson and Garris were convinced he would have already blasted himself many times over by the time we meet up with him in the story. So Johnson provided him with a number of old scars from the very beginning. From there, Johnson eventually takes him through

roughly six stages of burns, ranging from blasts from an exploding oil refinery to one sunburn on top of another as he gets baked by the desert sun and, finally, radiation burns when Trashcan Man decides to play with an atomic bomb near the end of the movie.

Although a complete over-the-head foam makeup prosthetic was used for the last stage of burns he receives from radiation, Johnson decided not to use foam for all of the burn stages. "It didn't seem reasonable for me to do foam rubber makeup when he's getting burn on top of burn," said Johnson. "So we developed a really neat thing using slip clay, paint and latex. We actually would paint his face very boldly at first and then apply slip clay, which is a thin, watery type of clay. Dry that with a hairdryer to the point where it starts to crack like a dry river bed. Latex over that and stretch the skin and make it

FACING THE FANS

"Talk about an informed readership!" said King. "They're not going to settle for 70% successful. They want it all. There are a lot of people out there who like this book!"

crack even more. Brush away areas, latex over that and paint him again. It worked beautifully because it literally looks as though his skin is flaking off. The pattern was complex enough so we could never have duplicated it with an appliance."

Ironically, it was the old age makeup for Ruby Dee's 108-year-old character Mother Abigail that proved to be the trickiest for Johnson's crew to develop. They didn't want to follow the standard practice of creating the illusion of old age by simply turning her face into a road map of wrinkles. So they conducted an extensive amount of research at convalescent homes and missions, taking life castings for three-dimensional reference, and producing what Johnson referred to as "unmakeup."

"I have to admit I was nervous because with any old age makeup like that: if it doesn't work you're totally pulled out of the movie and the illusion is completely shattered," said Johnson. "So, the approach we took was to do it very minimally, even though her face was completely covered in prosthetics except for her forehead and nose. We really did some nice

wrinkles toward the outside corners of the mouth and, because Ruby is about 60 years old herself, her skin was loose under the thing which helped the foam move and wrinkle in a real natural way.

"One thing that was interesting was we aged her sclera, the white part of the eye. The eyes are the red flags on old age makeup if the person is not really old. The standard in recent years is to just age the iris, the color part of the eye, with a cornea lens. But, we wanted to age the whole eye; so we had added some discoloration."

But Johnson admitted it was Ruby Dee who ultimately gave the old age makeup its best compliment. "Ruby said she didn't know how she was going to play the character. And the day, the minute we put the final touch on the test makeup, she said, 'That's it! I've got it!' She walked out and five minutes later she was in front of the cameras for a film test. She started playing the guitar and crying. Literally just tears pouring down her face. It was really moving."

Essentially, that's what *THE STAND* is about: the human drama. Facing the unknown

continued on page 22

Matt Frewer as Trashcan Man stage 2, the retarded itinerant who likes to blow up the bombs he finds in King's deserted post-apocalypse, makeup by Bill Corso.





DEVELOPMENT MOVIE HELL

How the big-budget movie ended up as grist for TV.

By Gary L. Wood

It began as all ABC Novels for Television have, as a novel. But as even the most casual Stephen King enthusiast knows, *THE STAND* has never been just a novel. The handling of his epic resulted in King's leaving Doubleday, his publisher since *Carrie*. After King became the horror brand name that he is, with New American Library as his new publisher, Doubleday agreed to reissue a new version of *The Stand*, unedited as King had wanted in the first place. *The Stand* was again a number one bestseller, new and improved.

For as long as *The Stand* has been in print, the quest to bring the story to the screen has consumed producer Richard P. Rubinstein. Together with director George Romero, their company, Laurel Entertainment, bought the screen rights to the book. *THE STAND* has always been understood to be Laurel's pet project, a labor of love destined to be their King masterpiece.

Though Romero eventually left the company and began developing projects on his own, attached at various stages to most King films, including *IT*, *PET SEMETARY* and *FIRE-STARTER*, Rubinstein stated, "*THE STAND* has remained a major focus on my part."

Warner Bros initially expressed interest in a deal for *THE STAND* and put the project into development. The first step was to whittle a two-hour script out of the massive trunk

of a novel. That job naturally fell to King himself.

But what King turned in was a script over 400 pages long, which would translate to more than six hours of screen time. King suggested that the only plausible way to adapt the novel would be as *two films*, one dealing with the epidemic which kills most of the population, and a second which would detail the resulting struggle of good vs. evil, Randall Flagg vs. Mother Abigail.

Noted King, "It would be possible to build a big artificial climax in the middle that would satisfy audiences for the time being. If it was all shot at once, the films could be released maybe three months or a season apart." Though it may have seemed like a radical, self-serving idea at the time, this strategy was eventually used successfully by Steven Spielberg to

Rubinstein on the *PET SEMETARY* set with Fred Gwynne. When Romero quit his Laurel partnership with Rubinstein, the producer turned to other directors.



Headier times: director George Romero (l), King and Richard Rubinstein on the set of *CREEPSHOW*. Laurel's option on *THE STAND* was King's gift to Romero.

produce *BACK TO THE FUTURE II* and *III*.

Eventually, it was decided to go for one feature-length film, as King continued to try to condense his epic. "I wrote five drafts," said King. "I finally just pushed it right off my desk! I called up Richard Rubinstein and said, 'You want it? You got it! Find somebody to put this shit together because I'm too close to it and I can't capsule it too much.' And I'm glad that I'm out of it, too! I'm *real* glad that I'm out of it. Because talk about an informed readership! It's just waiting. They're all going to go see this movie when it opens on the first night and no matter what happens, unless a lot of factors come together the

way they hardly ever do in Hollywood—the only case I can think of is *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST*, where the casting was perfect, the director was perfect, and the screenplay worked like a charm—unless *that* happens, they're going to be *pissed!* They're not going to settle for 70% successful. They want it *all*. There are a lot of people out there who like this book."

When the feature never materialized at Warner Bros, King was brought back into the fold to develop *THE STAND* as a miniseries for television. King capsuleized the first phase of *THE STAND*'s development by saying, "Let me run this down as well as I can. When I met George Romero, I really liked him. We came to an agreement that we would try to do this, so I wrote a draft. The original draft was half as long as the book!"

It was about that time, in 1984, that King swore off adapting his novels to the screen. He told *Time* magazine, "It's like sitting on a suitcase; everything has to be condensed to fit in. Time is the master of everything."

So with a screenplay from the literary Master of Horror and apparently the cinematic Master of Horror prepared to take the reins of the epic, the film could still not get made,



ROMERO'S LAMENT

“It didn’t have a Hollywood premise, two sentences you could say at the Polo Lounge. Steve wrote a great script but it was 170 pages and no one wanted to read it.”

great screenplay, but it was around 170 pages and, of course, no one wanted to read it.”

Despite outside pressures to take a different path, Rubinstein stayed true to his commitment to make *THE STAND* a feature-length motion picture with a theatrical release. “There are people who approached us about doing *THE STAND* as a miniseries, lots of them!” said Rubinstein. “It’s not what we wanted to do. We had a vision of this as a theatrical motion picture.”

But King admitted to entertaining many different options, “We talked a little about the way to go with it, the novel for television idea. But the networks don’t want to see the end of the world, particularly in prime time. Advertisers don’t want to sponsor the end of the world. Cable didn’t have enough money. For a long time I pushed for doing it in two sections—*STAND I* and *STAND II*...The final decision was to go for a very long feature film.”

King continued to work while the project simmered on the back burner. Laurel opted to produce three other King projects while *THE STAND* developed further. Rubinstein explained, “Initially when we bought the rights to *THE STAND*, we said, ‘This is going to be a big-budget movie and

it’s going to probably be important for us to have some projects before that one that would establish our credibility which would then help us to find the financing for *THE STAND*.”

Laurel’s *CREEPSHOW 2* made only a small splash at the boxoffice, but *CREEPSHOW* and *PET SEMATARY* were bonafide hits for the company. King stated that *PET SEMATARY*’s success was a major contributor to *THE STAND* “heating up” as a property, though the feature deal with Warners was made prior to the film’s success. After the *FIRESTARTER/CHRISTINE* years, *PET SEMATARY* proved that a King film could find a large audience, but *THE STAND* still did not have a workable script. But Warners was willing to shell out to speed up the development. Noted King, “The fact that they’re willing to part with \$30,000 just to get a treatment is a sign that they’re serious about it.”

Screenwriter Rospo Pallenberg (*EXCALIBUR*, *THE EMERALD FOREST*) was hired to write his own adaptation from the novel, not working from King’s earlier adaptation. “We spoke to more than one screenwriter,” said Rubinstein. “But ultimately we decided on Rospo because he appeared to have the

Makeup concepts for ABC’s miniseries by XFX, Inc. Early designs sculpted by Norman Cabrera for Flagg as the Scarecrow who stalks Mother Abigail.



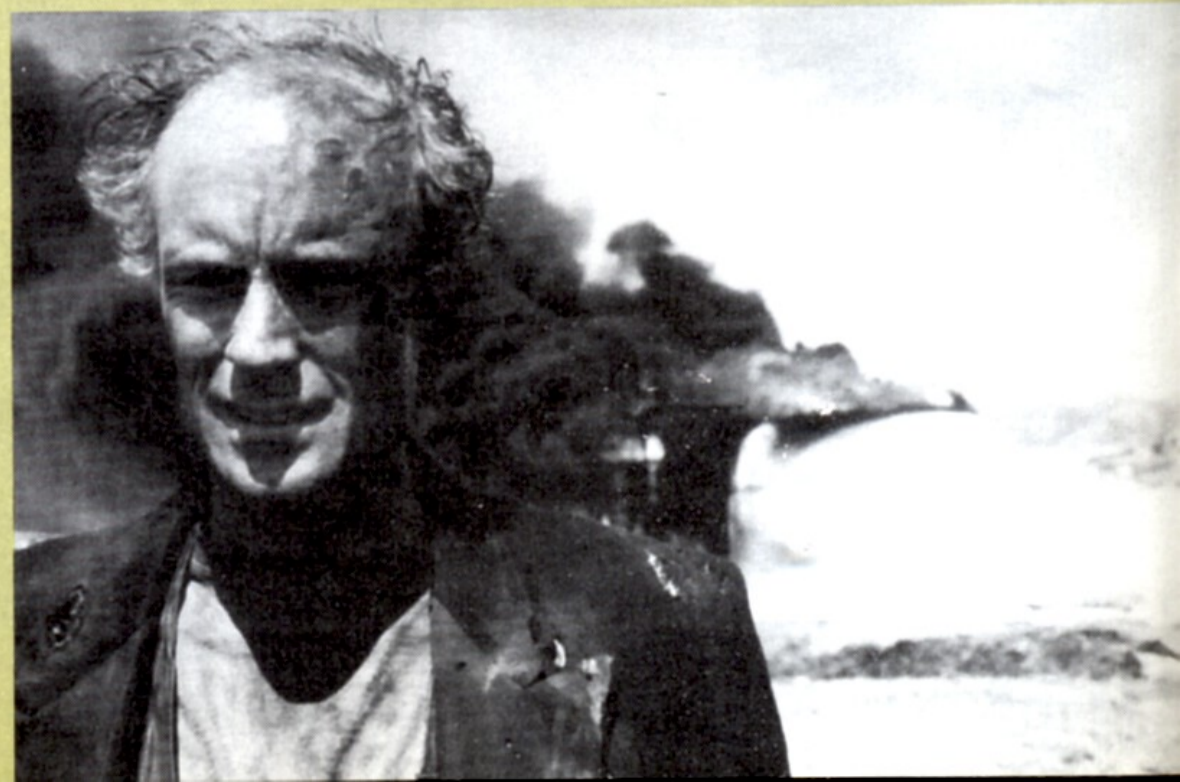
one other than people using Golden Age passes, JDs skipping school, and people who have come from their bowling leagues in the afternoon to see the picture. You’ve got to be able to get in two evening shows, and sometimes three in the big cities. I heard from one Warner Bros guy that the reason *THE SHINING* didn’t get into the black until release abroad was that it was two hours and 15 minutes long, so in a lot of cities the last show was cut. After 11:00 p.m. the babysitter goes on double time, and it becomes a problem.”

But Romero, always the Hollywood maverick, explained it in other terms, “It’s expensive. It’s got to be long. It’s got a lot of problems. But it doesn’t have this sort of obvious Hollywood premise; you can’t tell the story in two sentences at the Polo Lounge. So it’s kind of a hard sale. Steve wrote, I thought, a

despite cautious backing from Warner Bros and positive reports such as Robert Duvall’s interest in playing Randall Flagg, the Walkin’ Dude.

King explained why a four-hour movie would not get made, “One Warner Bros executive referred to it as ‘spill and fill,’ which is one of the ugliest phrases I’ve ever heard. What it means is that a picture cannot make money unless it can be turned over enough times in one day, and particularly during that time period when there’s some-

Matt Frewer, TV’s *MAX HEADROOM*, as Trashcan Man in ABC’s miniseries, an early makeup by Bill Corso before scarring by repeated explosive encounters.



best grasp of the problems of adapting the book. He was an out-and-out fan of the book. In fact, when Rospo walked into the first meeting he was carrying with him the original paperback edition. Now, I happen to know the editions because I follow these things. And I just happened to see the back cover of the book and it was the first one released. He said he was a fan and he had the proof in his hands."

Pallenberg explained, "I think in '82 or '81 I had read THE STAND and thought it would make an excellent film. I read it on my own recognizance and I actually mentioned it to Dino Di Laurentiis with whom I worked at the time screenwriting. Nothing panned out from that. Then I was a bit surprised that quite a few years later I was approached by Warner Bros."

"I felt that most of the [King] films have been badly adapted. I personally like THE STAND because I had read it on my own, without anybody asking me to look at its movie potential, and I thought it had movie potential."

Once Pallenberg sewed up the assignment, he sat down to adapt the wide-ranging novel. His first step? "Took a deep breath." He then began his own technique of adaptation, not so much condensing, but "you collapse and reinvent, and sparks fly...I had to do some reinvention in the stitchery. In other words, it's like taking strands out of a tapestry. You bunch it together and you see that you have to make certain changes to make it work...I think you have to reinvent for the cinema form and if you don't, you're doomed. I think that the fact that Stephen King is who he is, commands a lot of respect. People are not willing, or maybe they're slightly afraid, to change his work."

Pallenberg saw the story of THE STAND as "a spiritual quest telling of the strangeness about the world in which we enter." But even Pallenberg realized King's book would be easier to adapt as a miniseries. "It had occurred to me on a bad day," he laughed.

According to Rubinstein, Pallenberg's adaptation was a success. Noted Rubinstein,

"Rospo is happy. Warners is happy. Yes, Steve is happy. Rospo has successfully made the tough decisions to make this into a manageable screenplay. We're in a fine-tuning stage, which is great after ten years."

But the fine-tuning soon turned into development hell when Warners got cold feet and passed on the project. Rubinstein was once again in search of a distributor. It came from the last source he had expected, or probably wanted. After their success with IT, ABC was looking for other King properties that they could turn into Novels for Television, one a year during the sweeps weeks. ABC bought both TOMMYKNOCKERS and THE STAND.

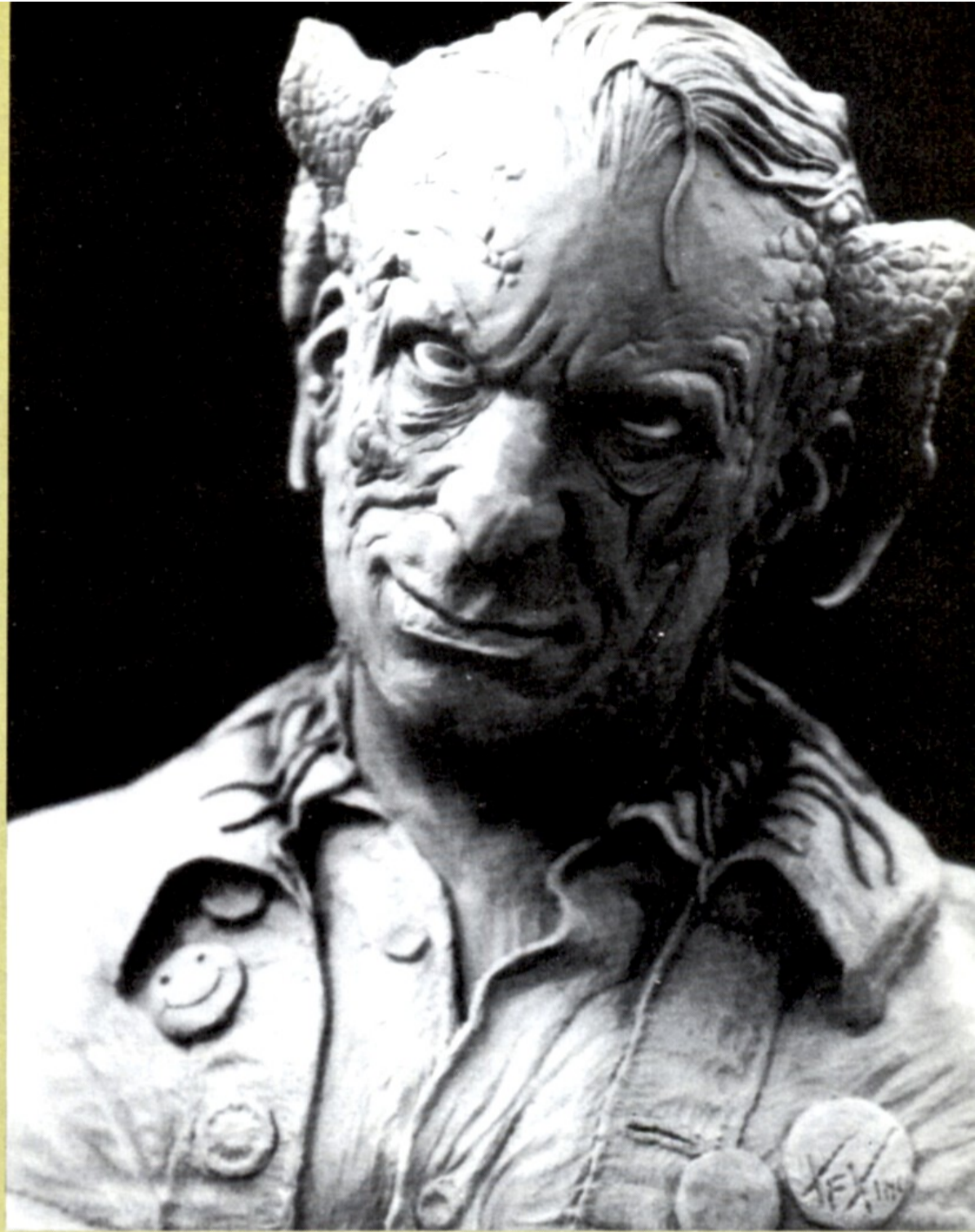
After fighting the television route for years, Rubinstein said, "It was a matter of having another option presented to get the movie made." In other words, it was the choice of a miniseries, not getting the film made at all, or simply struggling for another ten years to find financing.

King was ecstatic, "ABC said I could have five-and-a-half hours—eight with ads—so I jumped like a hungry trout!"

Pallenberg's expensive script was filed away and King was once again commissioned to adapt his book, this time in the longer format. Most would feel that this is *proper*: King adapting what many consider his masterpiece. But more than a few were disappointed when Mick Garris (SLEEPWALKERS) was hired to direct. Nothing against Garris, but King followers felt the film had only one director: George Romero.

Romero, however, was quick to point out that the press sometimes takes liberties with directors and their forthcoming projects. "Anyone who said it was going to be my *next* film was wrong to begin with," said Romero. "I mean, we [Laurel] had the rights to the book. And when I first met Steve, he gave me a copy of THE STAND, the hardback copy, and wrote on it, 'Maybe we'll get to work together some day and maybe on this.' Ever since that I always thought it would be somehow proper to [direct THE STAND]. And I'd love it, but it's gotten real difficult."

Neither King, Rubinstein,



Early makeup concepts for Demon Flagg for ABC's miniseries, sculpted by Norman Cabrera of XFX, Inc. Makeup designs for the eight-hour TV version went through an approval process that included King and director Mick Garris.



nor Romero would state why the director was not offered the job, referring only to "scheduling conflicts," the same problem that kept Romero from directing PET SEMATARY, another project he was fond of.

The quest to film THE STAND has been equally as embroiled as the epic struggle within the pages of the book. Success or failure will be measured in many ways, ratings being the most important. But in the hearts of King's fans, the measure of success will be determined by how close the film

comes to the images they have held in their imaginations for over ten years—Mother Abigail, Randall Flagg, the Trash Can Man, and the Lincoln Tunnel. Will King's hardcore fandom accept Rob Lowe and Molly Ringwald?

And hopefully, at the very least, after ten years, it won't leave us with the attitude which Romero had regarding Mary Lambert's take on PET SEMATARY. When asked what he would have done differently, he laughed, "I would have done it *better*." □

with no idea how you will handle it until that moment, when you make your stand, alone and naked except for belief in yourself and what you feel is just.

Seventeen years ago when a fatherless boy, who, three years earlier lost his mother to cancer and a year before that had been a college graduate making \$1.60 an hour while working in a laundry, began writing this book, our nation was in a time of great upheaval. We had just suffered a humiliating defeat in Vietnam; gas lines were becoming a way of life; Nixon had recently become the first President to resign; inflation was running rampant; and, we were all wrestling, both as a nation and as individuals, with a seemingly endless number of social, economic and moral questions.

King had been trying to write another book—about Patty Hearst and the SLA. But his mind kept wandering back to a news story about a chemical spill in Utah that had killed a bunch of sheep and the proclamation of a Midwestern preacher on a Bible-thumping radio station that, “Once in every generation the plague will fall among them.”

Seventeen years later, as we approach the end of a millennium, that same fatherless boy has returned to once again tell his tale. Some will love it. Some will hate it. And some will just change the channel. □

Whitney Horgan, lips fused by Flagg-tossed energy that sets off the A-bomb climax, makeup by David Dupuis.



STEPHEN KING, THE HORROR FRANCHISE

THE STAND is but the epic tip of the King TV and movie options iceberg.

By Gary L. Wood

After all this time and all the bad movie adaptations, it seems the Master of Horror has begun to show some selectivity in whom he sells his material to. Once asked how he felt about what Hollywood has done to his books, Stephen King looked to a nearby shelf and answered, “They haven’t done anything to my books; they’re still right there.” King, it seems, has changed his mind and begun to take the films, although separate entities, personally.

Some suggest this lesson was learned when *THE LAWNMOWER MAN*, a film loosely based on his short story but one which King had no connection with, did better at the box-office than *SLEEPWALKERS*, King’s first original screenplay. *THE LAWNMOWER MAN* was sold years before as a package with several other stories and took time to go into production. *SLEEPWALKERS* was rushed into production and released only to be beat to the punch by *THE LAWNMOWER MAN*. King finally realized that these projects can come back to haunt him.

King now, it seems, is sticking by his old, faithful friends, trusting only Castle Rock with *DELORES CLAIBORNE*, to be produced as a feature film, and Laurel Entertainment, who



King and Laurel Entertainment producer Richard Rubinstein, creative partners on *THE STAND* and a host of other King projects planned for filming.

will produce *THE LANGOLIERS*, as an ABC Novel for Television, based on a story from King’s anthology *Four Past Midnight*.

Castle Rock, is also readying its version of *RITA HAYWORTH AND THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION* for release. Written and directed by Frank Darabont (the King-sized short *THE WOMAN IN THE ROOM* and *YOUNG INDIANA JONES*), Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman star in a faithful version of one of King’s non-horror stories. From the *Different Seasons* collection which gave us “The Body”/

STAND BY ME, King’s story is about two men who find friendship and hope, while serving time in prison.

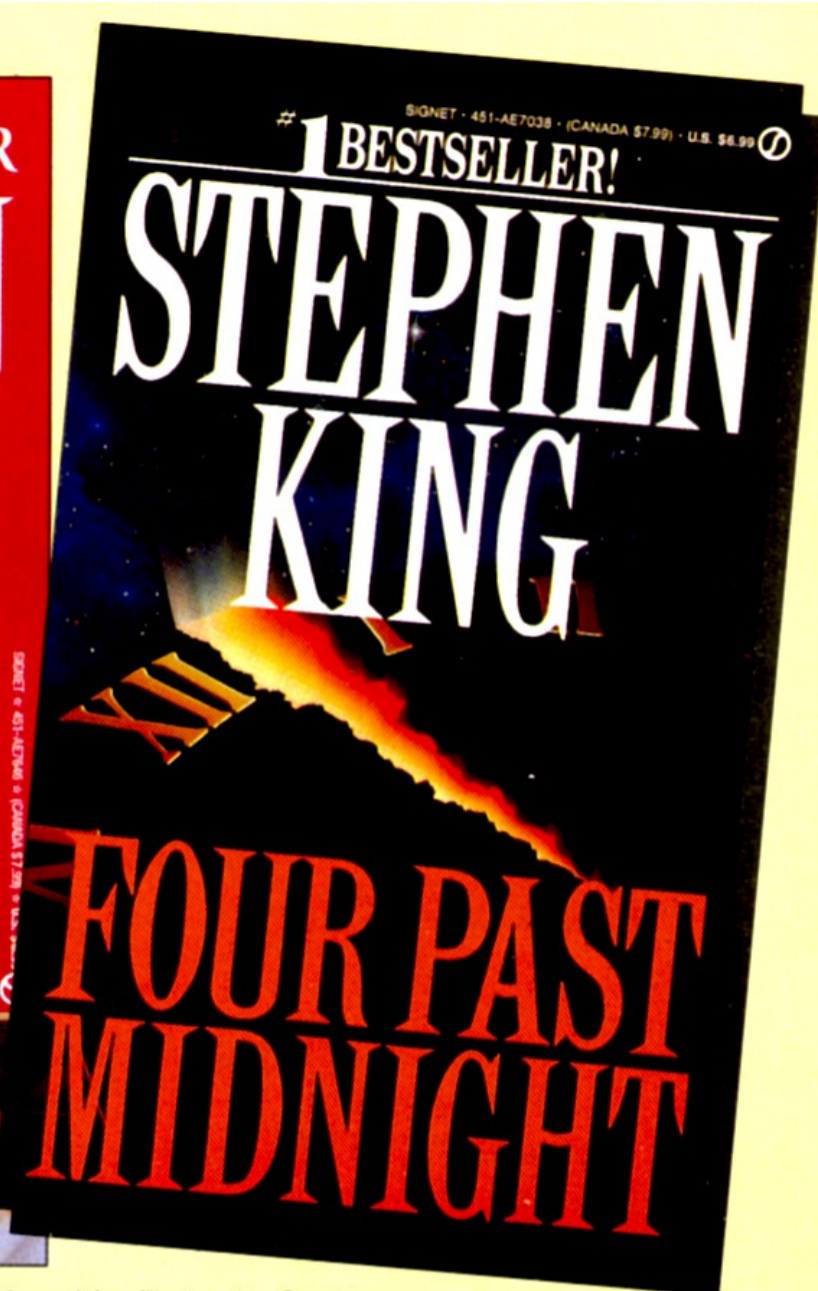
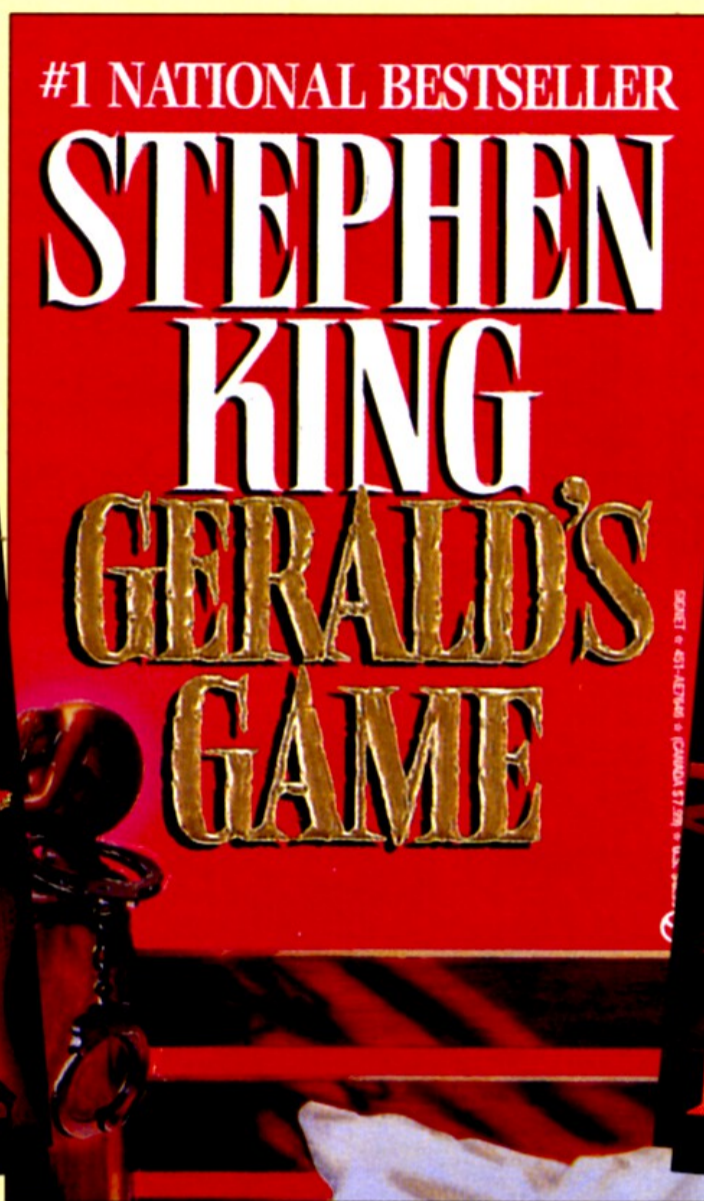
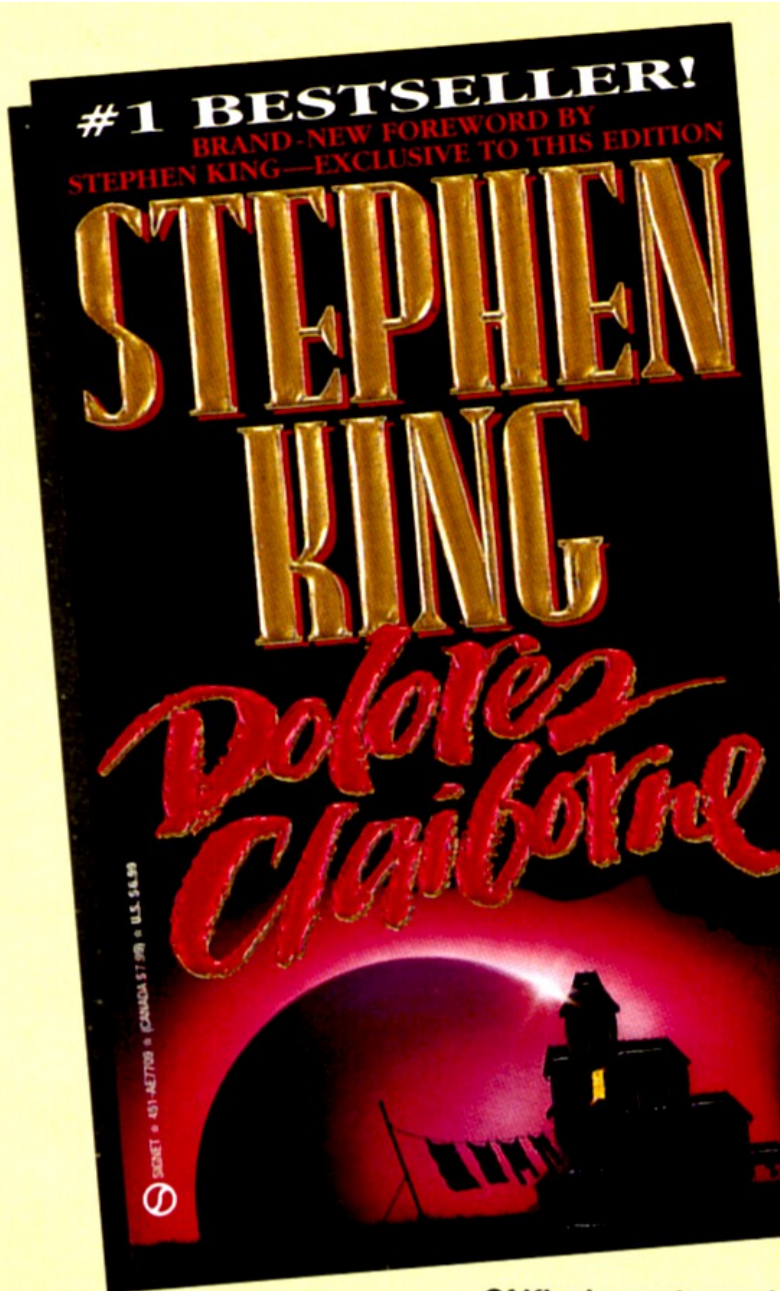
DELORES CLAIBORNE, still without a script, promises to be a harder adaptation in that the novel is a solid character study, told in Delores’ own dialogue during a police interrogation. Delores is accused of killing an elderly woman whom she takes care of. She is innocent, but in order to clear herself, she must tell the whole story—including how she killed her abusive husband many years before, a crime for which no one suspected her.

Laurel Entertainment still has many King projects in various stages of development. *THINNER* has

a script by Michael McDowell, with Tom Holland (*FRIGHT NIGHT*, *CHILD’S PLAY*) set to direct the feature. *THE NIGHT FLIER* and *CREEPSHOW 3* are planned as television projects, the latter being readied as an animated special.

But after wrapping *THE STAND*, *THE LANGOLIERS* appears to be Laurel’s next King project.

King’s story is set on a sold-out “red-eye” flight from Los Angeles to Boston which suddenly finds itself with only 11 passengers. In a very *TWILIGHT ZONE*-like story, the



Of King's most recent bestsellers, DOLORES CLAIBORNE has been optioned for filming by Castle Rock, *Gerald's Game*, difficult to adapt, has gone unsold and THE LANGOLIERS, a story from the anthology *Four Past Midnight* will be filmed by Laurel Entertainment as a 1995 ABC Novel for Television miniseries, in the tradition of THE STAND and THE TOMMYKNOCKERS.

other passengers have disappeared in mid-air. The remaining passengers must deal with the mystery and decide what to do next. When they decide to land, they find themselves far removed from the world they left. The miniseries is to be written and directed by Tom Holland.

THE TALISMAN, King's collaboration with horror novelist Peter Straub (GHOST STORY), is still being considered as a feature at Amblin Entertainment. Long in development, it looks like a good candidate for the 1996 Stephen King ABC Novel for Television. The epic fantasy tells about the odd journey of a boy named Jack who must "jump" between this world and a parallel world in which time and space is condensed, to travel from Maine to California in search of the talisman that will save his ailing mother. He quickly realizes that events that occur in one world have direct results in the other.

THE MANGLER is another rogue King project that has come back to haunt the author's best-selling money machine. The story was part of the original LAWNMOWER MAN package bought by Allied Vision. King became angry when Allied Vision turned THE

LAWN MOWER MAN into a story dealing with virtual reality, rather than the simple little *EC Comics*-type story he wrote. But King was most upset that the film was released under the possessory title STEPHEN KING'S LAWNMOWER MAN. When the film became a modest hit, competing with King's own SLEEPWALKERS, King sued and won.

The writer/director of THE LAWNMOWER MAN, Brett Leonard, admitted he was a King fan and tried to maintain a King feel to the film even though the story contained about one minute of King's actual story line. Leonard felt that King expected his name to be used in

the marketing of any property he sold, no matter how little the finished product resembled the source material.

THE MANGLER, like other stories from King's *Night Shift* collection that have been filmed—THE LAWNMOWER MAN, GRAVEYARD SHIFT and CHILDREN OF THE CORN—fails to have enough story content to sustain a feature film. No doubt the producers will be reluctant this time to put the misleading possessive nomenclature "Stephen King's" before the title.

THE MANGLER is now in post-production and stars Robert Englund and Ted Levine

The fly in King's ointment: THE LAWNMOWER MAN was more successful than SLEEPWALKERS, his own project. Franchise crasher THE MANGLER is next.



(SILENCE OF THE LAMBS). It is directed by Tobe Hooper and deals with a man who takes a job in a laundry only to find that the large clothing press is possessed and hungry.

Ironically, while King has stated that he is "holding back" on selling his material, and recent efforts like THE DARK HALF, Castle Rock's production of NEEDFUL THINGS, failed to find an audience, activity still seems to be high on King films. Still, King's most interesting and psychological novel of recent years remains unoptioned: *Gerald's Game*. It tells the story of a young wife who reluctantly submits to her husband's sexual games involving handcuffs. Alone in their secluded summer home in the middle of October, the two begin the game when she decides she has had enough. After a struggle, Gerald is dead, and the wife is left in rural Maine handcuffed to the bed.

What follows is a fascinating character study within her disintegrating mind as she faces a slow death and sure madness in seclusion. People from her past enter her mind and carry on conversations in an interiorized story that would be a challenge for any screenwriter. □

BABYLON 5

The next generation of science fiction on television debuts.

By Mark A. Altman

If all goes as planned, five years from now **BABYLON 5**, the syndicated science fiction space saga from Warner Bros Domestic Television, will be entering its final season. All the mysteries series creator and co-executive producer J. Michael Straczynski carefully laid out during the show's projected five-year run will be revealed, ending in an eagerly anticipated final season.

In the past, Straczynski has stated adamantly that even if the show is the next **STAR TREK**, with stellar ratings and trick-or-treating kids clad as Minbaris, the final curtain will come down after episode 110. But in pure George Lucas fashion, Straczynski made another astonishing revelation while speaking in his austere production office adjacent to the **BABYLON 5** soundstages.

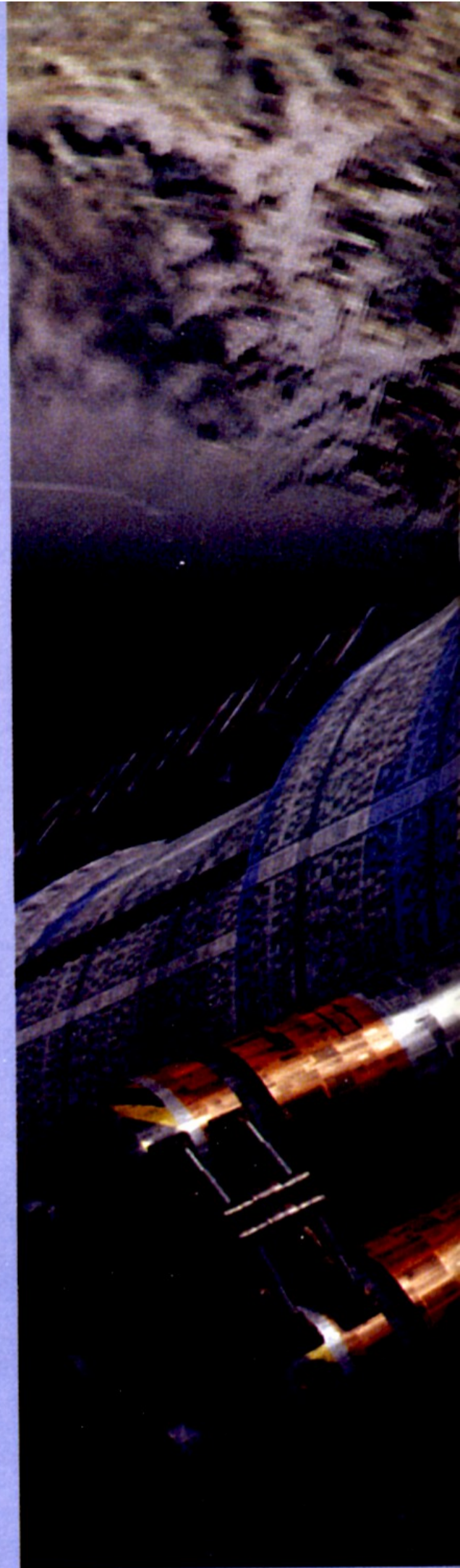
Proclaimed Straczynski, "If there's a sequel, which is already written out, that's my swan song in television. I'm getting out because everything I will have wanted to say, I would have said in the course of telling the **BABYLON 5** story."

Added Straczynski about the second five-year arc, "After the **BABYLON 5** story is finished, there is a thread that spins off, which could be done if there's interest. It would be a spin-off, but the **BABYLON 5** story ends in five years."

The **BABYLON 5** pilot, which aired early in 1993 as a two-hour telefilm on Warner Bros Prime Time Entertainment

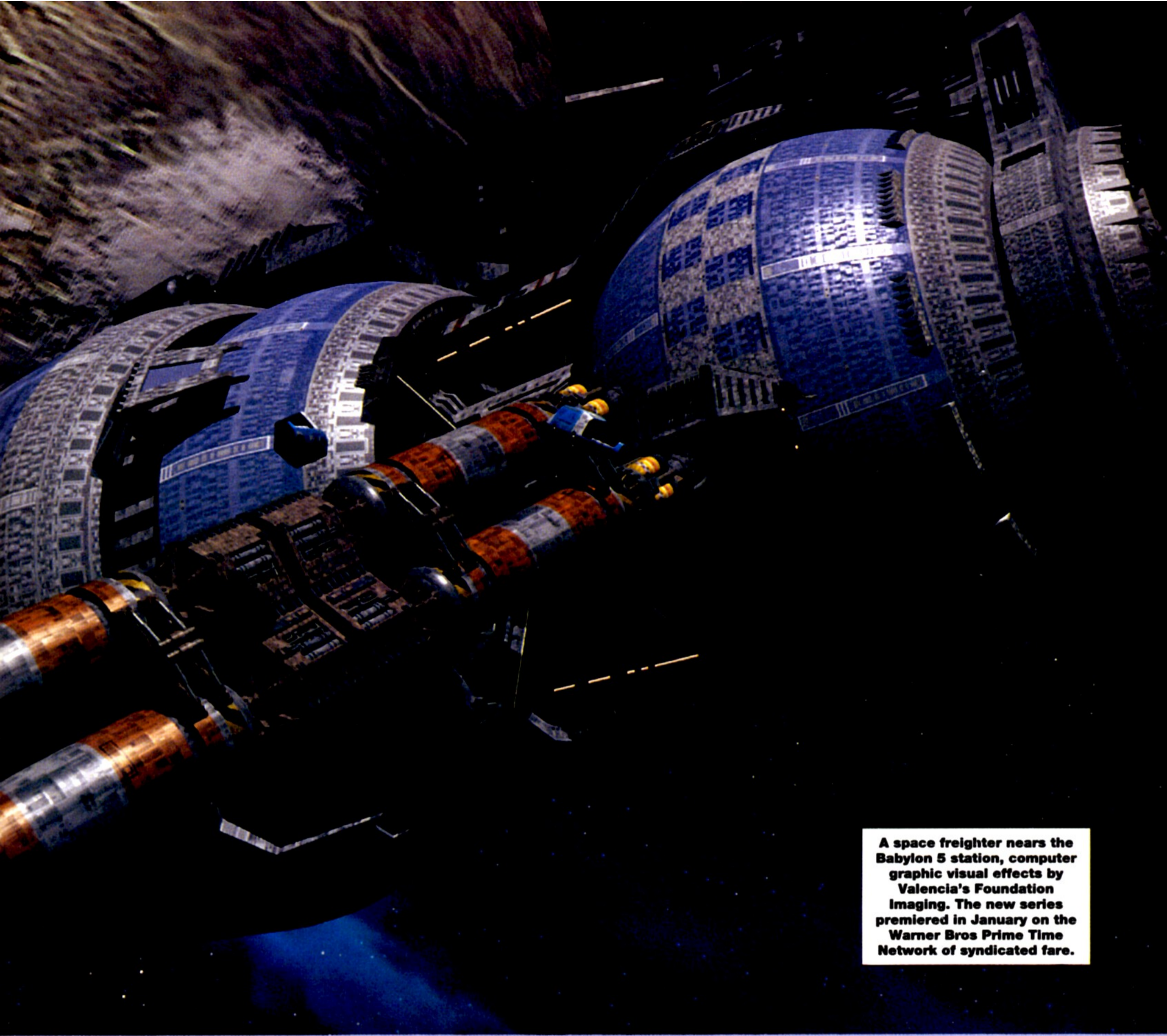


Peter Jurasik as Centauri ambassador Londo (I) and Andreas Katsulas as Narn ambassador G'Kar, diplomacy astride the Babylon 5 station's main corridor.



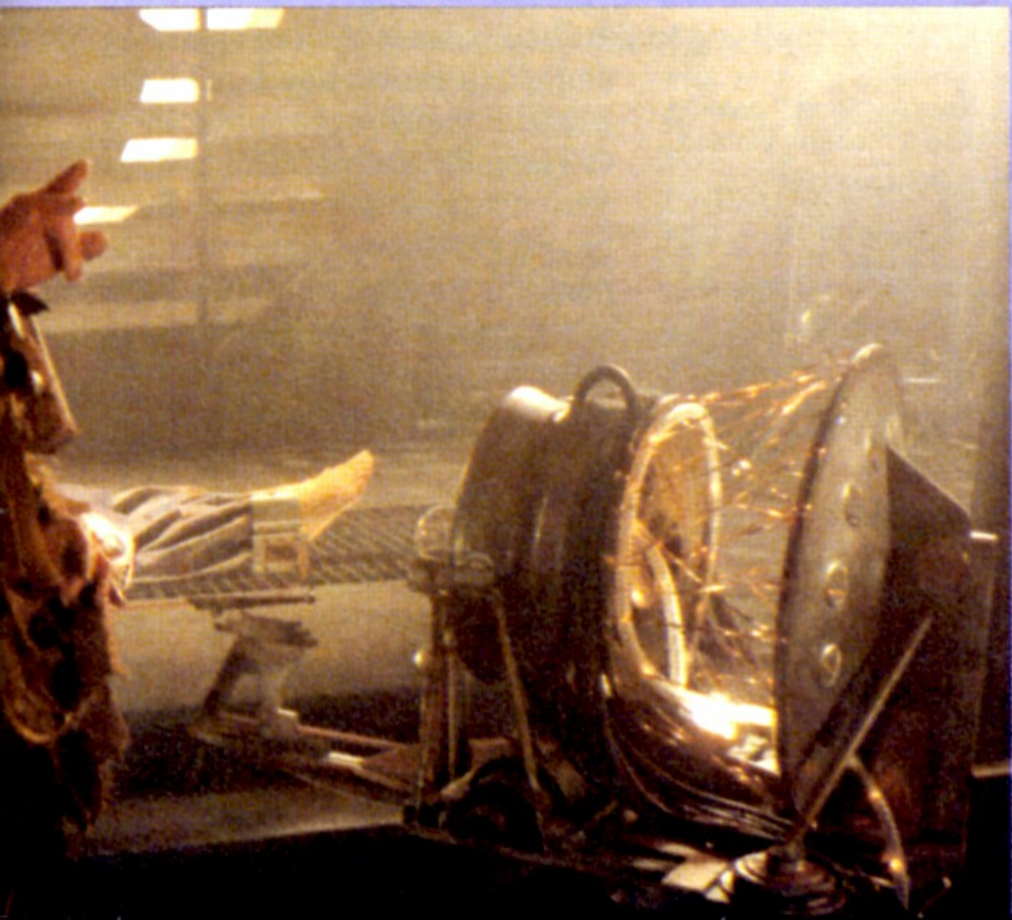
"Soul Hunter" W. Morgan Sheppherd.





A space freighter nears the Babylon 5 station, computer graphic visual effects by Valencia's Foundation Imaging. The new series premiered in January on the Warner Bros Prime Time Network of syndicated fare.

Spiritual alchemy, stealing the soul of Minbari ambassador Delenn. Right: Traversing the "zokolow" (Spanish for Central Plaza), the station's main market area.





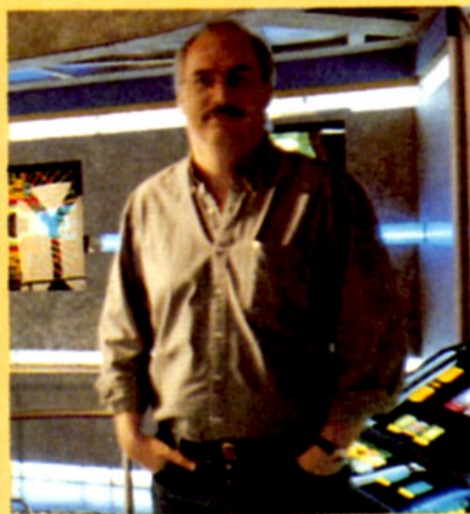
FRANCHISING OUTER SPACE

Creator J. Michael Straczynski on his science fiction philosophy.

By Mark Altman

Alien assassination attempts. Drug smuggling. Terrorist attacks. Squabbling diplomats. It's not exactly the pristine future viewers are accustomed to in today's televised science fiction fare and yet *BABYLON 5* series creator J. Michael Straczynski doesn't see his new series as pessimistic. "I think our show is an optimistic show," he enthused. "Whenever you have a future where there is a tomorrow, it is optimistic by its very nature. There's a difference between a saccharine future and an optimistic future. Our future still has people working out their problems. They haven't all been resolved yet. The point is they are still working them out and they often find a way around them."

Straczynski, in choosing his words delicately, believes that beneath the science fiction hardware and high-concept gimmicks of his weekly episodes is a distinct philosophy which is just as optimistic as *STAR TREK* without its Pollyannish views of human behavior. "I think one need not be blind to real problems people have to be optimistic about the future," he said. "We continue to persevere no matter what the obstacles ahead. What we have forgotten and underline with this show is that we are building a future. There's a sense among our generation that after the '60s something went wrong and if we could figure out what it was everything would be okay. In the course of our story, there is a sense there is something



The next Gene Roddenberry? Straczynski on the set, launching his six-year-old dream project.

starting to go wrong and that things are unravelling. They also want to find out what it is and make it right again. During the course of the show they do establish what's wrong and right what that happens to be."

Straczynski pointed out that *BABYLON 5* is not defined by opposites, but rather the various shades of grey which characterize human existence. "Not everyone is a hero and a villain," he said. "What sci-

ence fiction seems to be saying is that there are the good guys and the bad guys and there's no one else. That's bullshit. There's a guy who turns the wrench in the bowels of the station who makes it work and there's a guy who's in over his head with gambling debts. There's the vast panoply of human experience that hasn't been dealt with."

After toiling as the hired help on a number of series ranging from *THE NEW TWILIGHT ZONE* to *MURDER, SHE WROTE*, Straczynski is relishing his role as the great bird of his own galaxy. "It's a

Indiana Jones in Outer Space: David Warner as Aldous Gajic in "Grail," coming on Board Babylon 5 to search for the Holy Grail, but finding a monster instead.



Marshall Teague as the unstoppable alien adversary unearthed by xenarcheologist David McCallum in "Infection," biomechanoid makeup by Optic Nerve.

hoot," he said. "It's very strange being in charge. It's a weird feeling. If you're in a big production meeting and you make a very small joke, you get a very large laugh—which you know isn't due to the joke. Creatively, it's wonderful because I'm telling the stories I want to tell. It's a six year-old dream come to fruition."

After toiling as the host of "Hour 25," Los Angeles radio's premiere call-in science fiction show, a *Writer's Digest* columnist and writer on such shows as *THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS* and *CAPTAIN POWER*, Straczynski couldn't be more pleased to be calling the shots. "It's a wonderful opportunity and what I worked for all these years," he said.

What's unique about Straczynski's show is its defined five-year arc. Pre-planned from the outset, few of the creative team are privvy to the show's solar-system spanning saga. "I cried when I read the bible," said actor Michael O'Hare. "It's a beautiful story. I was shocked and amazed. Straczynski is a great storyteller. He could sit around a campfire and tell a great stories. Joe is such a fantastic storyteller with a real epic sense of code and honor."

For Straczynski, who spent years on convention panels preaching to the converted about what's wrong with televised science fiction, the realization of his dream project gives him no small sense of

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Network in first-run syndication and was greeted by strong ratings, prompting the network to greenlight production of the series for 22 episodes, which premiered in January. Straczynski's dream of launching the series became a reality as episodes of the show aired on independent television stations across America.

"I had great faith in the project," said actor Michael O'Hare, who returns to duty as Commander Michael Sinclair, the Earth Alliance officer in charge of BABYLON 5. "I believed in the project because Joe is such a great storyteller. He has this all planned out. It's not just what are we going to do this episode? Joe has a story that he wants to tell that he says will take five years and he has it all charted out."

"I never had a question about the show going," said co-star Jerry Doyle, who portrays security chief Michael Garibaldi. "From a personal standpoint, I wondered if I was going with the show. That's always the question, whether it's performance related, set politics, network, who knows? I was just fortunate enough that not only did the show go, but I went with it."

In the intervening year between production of the pilot and the beginning of production, many aspects of the show have changed—although its storyline is not one of them. The entire BABYLON saga, as creator Straczynski calls it, has been pre-planned and carefully plotted. Although freelance writers will be contributing many of the show's scripts and bringing their own unique elements, each episode will reveal another piece of Straczynski's intricate puzzle.

"I know where each piece fits in the course of the season," said Straczynski. "We don't tend to screw a lot with the writers' words as long as they're within the parameters we assign them. Our goal is to say, 'That point in the horizon is where we're going. I don't care how

“Joe [Straczynski] is a great storyteller. He has a story that he wants to tell that he says will take five years, and he has it all charted out.”

—Actor Michael O'Hare—



Michael O'Hare as Babylon 5 station commander Jeffrey Sinclair, equipped with a breathing mask to enter the methane atmosphere of the alien quadrant.

you want to get there provided we all arrive at the same place at the same time.”

Realizing the first year of stories is a small, hand-picked group of freelancers. "One reason STAR TREK invites everyone on the planet to come in to pitch is they're more or less out of ideas," said Straczynski. "We haven't had that problem, nor do we intend to, because we know where everything is going. I brought in Dorothy Fontana, David Gerrold, Larry DeTillo, Christy Marx and Harlan Ellison and said here's the story we want to write. They can also bring in a B-story of their own if they like and there are also some which are stand-alone pieces."

Even with the meticulous planning, Straczynski admitted he is still willing to deviate from his plans on occasion. "Dorothy [Fontana] came up with a story called 'Legacies,' which is better than what we

had for that slot," said Straczynski, "so we dumped what we had and put hers in its place, which is entirely her story. Each story must stand alone so you can watch the series in any order you want, but that the more you watch the more you get out of it."

Noted Fontana, former story editor of the classic STAR TREK, on her latest assignment in space, "I've done a ton of westerns and DALLAS and THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO and all of those were fun to write, because the producers were good people and enjoyed working with writers. That's the prime ingredient of any good show, and certainly the case on BABYLON 5 where they are writers themselves."

And, as for the future, story editor DeTillo and Straczynski plan to continue utilizing writers with science fiction credentials. "It's dumb not to," said Straczynski. "If you're working on a cop show, work with people who've done a show in that genre, and if you're

doing a sitcom, you want writers who've written comedies. The only time they don't do that is when they do science fiction and what happens is you get Data on a holodeck doing a western."

Straczynski promised that by the end of the show's first season many of the mysteries set up in the pilot will be explained. "You'll know what happened to Sinclair at the Battle of The Line, but that will open up the question of why it happened," he said. "You'll know more about the psi corps as well. A lot of the questions we asked during the pilot will be answered in the course of the season, including things some thought were plot glitches. People have asked how did the poison get onto Kosh's hand if he were wearing an encounter suit? In 'Parliament of Dreams' we ask that question and it will open up the question of how much is that suit really needed and how much is camouflage,

I'm In Charge Here: Commander Sinclair

Michael O'Hare, who plays BABYLON 5 Commander Jeffrey Sinclair (right), recently had a T-shirt made up that reads, "I'm not in charge, but I play someone on television who is."

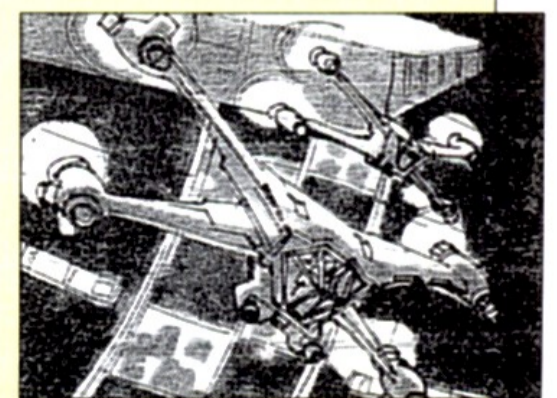
O'Hare is very enthused about the five year odyssey series creator J. Michael Straczynski has envisioned for the character. "Joe has really defined a pretty complete journey for Sinclair," said O'Hare. "He's been a warrior and now has to operate on a diplomatic level, but he still loves to be shot through space. He likes excitement and adventure and the stars. It's a metaphor for this country on a certain level. There's a sense of adventure and that, no matter what the problems are, the average citizen has a great distaste for injustice."



"I think Sinclair is more of a hero for today. He's a sadder but wiser hero. He's not 23 years old. He's been through a lot and things did not end up so heroically for him. Earth Alliance is very suspicious of him. There's a certain mettle and will and belief in what's decent that Sinclair has and there are fears of not being able to pull it off."

Star Wars

One aspect of BABYLON 5 that distinguishes it from the competing universe of Starfleet are the show's space fighters (below), which harken back to ones inspired by STAR WARS, with one major difference. "We're doing non-aerodynamic ships that are designed to move on any axis at all," said producer J. Michael Straczynski. "When these things go into action it looks very cool, going off in different directions."



Protecting the Peace: Michael Garibaldi

Jerry Doyle, the Wall Street wiz-turned-Hollywood hotshot, waxes poetic about his character, Security Chief Garibaldi. "All this guy does is work," sighed the actor. "There's no women, there's no booze and there's no hoop."

Despite Garibaldi's lack of recreational activities, Doyle couldn't be more pleased with the direction his character has taken in the series. "Everything that I've seen about my character, I dig. I like the position that I'm in where I have the comedic moments in the scenes and the irreverence.

There are some stories that I have coming up about my character that seem to be very challenging. I look forward to doing those. I love the way they write for me. They write to the way I speak. I never say 'I will not be a party to that.' It's always 'won't,' 'ain't' and 'gonna' so it's not hard to remember the lines because that's the way I talk."

Doyle doesn't have his eye on a command of his own. "I can't imagine the workload that Michael O'Hare has as the commander," said Doyle. "I couldn't do that at this point in my career. It's a lot of work and very demanding. I enjoy not having to work that much."

Armed and Dangerous: PPG Handguns

A bigger series budget has afforded the construction of needed props, including the PPG handgun, designed and built by Gene Young. Machined out of 20 pieces of aluminum, four guns were created out of the metal, while six stunt guns were created for background useage. "They were supposed to look like the futuristic version of a present day police gun," said Young.



which we couldn't answer in the pilot, because there wasn't time."

Among the other developments planned for the first year are the revelation that a botched first contact with the Minbari led to the "Earth/Minbari" war, when an Earth Alliance ship destroyed a Minbari craft carrying the leader of the mysterious "Grey Council." The Narn will continue on their imperialistic crusade while Centauri Ambassador Londo is confronted with a chance to reclaim past glories when he is contacted by an enigmatic alien empire, known only as the Shadowmen.

Although Straczynski is mum about the details regarding further developments, even those privy to his machinations sometimes try to sidestep finding out too much. In the case of Andrea Thompson, who plays the station's new telepath, Talia Winters, she prefers being kept unaware. "I'd rather have it as life is," said Thompson. "If you knew what was going to happen five years from now, you might be tempted to check out. It could be just the same old stuff, but then again, something really wonderful could happen. I really don't want to know. I want to be surprised. I don't know a lot about what's going to happen except that Joe has told me that Talia plays a very large role in the show, so I'm just waiting for them to clue me in as we go."

Jerry Doyle has more practical reasons for shying away from finding out too much about his character. "There's a bible that's available to everybody, which I chose not to read," the fledgling actor and former Wall Street broker said. "I enjoy not knowing where it's going. Not having years and years of actor's muscles built up, I have this fear that I'm going to end up playing the result instead of the process. At least when I don't know where I'm going, I'll play the course instead of the destination."

Ultimately though, despite

“I would like to get away from the STAR TREK cliché that since it's the future, we must all go around talking like English earls.”

—Story editor Larry DeTillo—



Michael O'Hare as Commander Jeffrey Sinclair and Andrea Thompson as Talia Winters, the station's new Psi Corps telepath, characters with human foibles.

the complexities of Straczynski's grand plan, most everyone involved with the series agreed that the show is about the characters at its heart. "You didn't like all the cops on HILL STREET BLUES, but you appreciated their pain, their joys, their triumphs and their losses," said BABYLON 5 story editor Larry DeTillo, a veteran of shows such as CAPTAIN POWER and THE HITCHHIKER. "That's what we want to do on BABYLON 5. We want it to be a real human series even in a universe where some humans are marsupials and some guys have spots on their heads with Larry Fine's haircut. It's got to be a human show, otherwise it doesn't fly."

For noted author Harlan Ellison, who serves as the show's creative consultant, the appeal of the characters is their unpredictability.

Over the course of the five-year

arc, many in the ensemble will go through some dramatic emotional and physical changes. "There is a phrase when you write for television, which you hear invariably, which is that our character wouldn't do that," he told an audience in San Diego. "I love that phrase. It is the thinking of very small-minded men and women who assume because they have found a template for a character, that's exactly what they would do. No human being is predictable. We all do very peculiar things and that's one of the nice things about the way Joe has written this. I despise turning on a television show and knowing within three minutes of the opening exactly what the ending's going to be."

Story editor Larry DeTillo pointed out that avoiding the familiar science fiction trappings, largely those manifested in the STAR TREK series, are a priority. "I would like to get away from the cliché that it's the future so we must all go around talking like

English earls," he said. "Everyone is not very civilized on our show and that's one of the differences between us and STAR TREK. We don't have perfect people who are always nice to each other. Certainly, if we had aliens carrying spears, we wouldn't surrender galaxy-class starships to them. There's a cliché that people in the future have to be better than us. The funny thing about our pilot is that you have the aliens acting much more human because they have passions, they gamble, they drink and fight with each other. They're very human, whereas, you have the humans walking around very stiffly talking in clipped phrases and being very military. That's the cliché we'd like to avoid."

Added Andrea Thompson, "What's intriguing about this show is that it's not a utopian future. It's not like STAR TREK or anything else on television, nor does it look like anything

5

IT CAME FROM THE VIDEO TOASTER

Foundation Imaging forges creature effects with computer graphics ease.

By Mark A. Altman

For the episode "Grail," written by Christy Marx, Ron Thornton and his team at Foundation Imaging were given the long-awaited opportunity to fulfill a promise they made to Joe Straczynski over a year ago: creating a computer-generated creature.

Work on the creature, known as "the feeder," began with John Vulich and Everett Burrell at Optic Nerve who design the show's make-up prosthetics. Both are converts to New-Tech's Video Toaster technology, who had been hoping to use the technique themselves to create a CG creature.

"We made a deal with New-Tech when we were working on THE DARK HALF because we needed some of their digitizers and paint programs to do some designs," said Burrell. "We developed a relationship with them. At the time, we were looking at these Silicon Graphics machines and the cheapest ones are like \$10,000 and they weren't even 24-bit machines. So we got into the Toaster and kept adding on more and bought a single-frame recorder because obviously we needed to out-put to film or D2."

Optic Nerve's creature designs went to Foundation Imaging. "Once it came to us, we started to tweak it and do image



The "Feeder" revealed to be inside Ambassador Kosh in "Grail," a makeup effects prop (above) by Optic Nerve matched with computer graphics.

wraps for it," said Thornton, who was heavily involved in the pre-production planning devising the complexities of the creature's motion. "At that time, we didn't know to what extent and how much of it we were going to have to do and we assumed there would be a full-side physical version made."

Foundation suggested ideas to make the creature's appearance more exciting. "We came up with the idea that it's quick and leaps around," said Thornton, "As soon as Sinclair's guys break into the room, it leaps into the ceiling pipes. There's a whole process we went through with Joe [Straczynski] and the physical effects people and the set designers to work out how we could choreograph the scene to still tell the same story elements but make it a little bit more exciting and stretch the

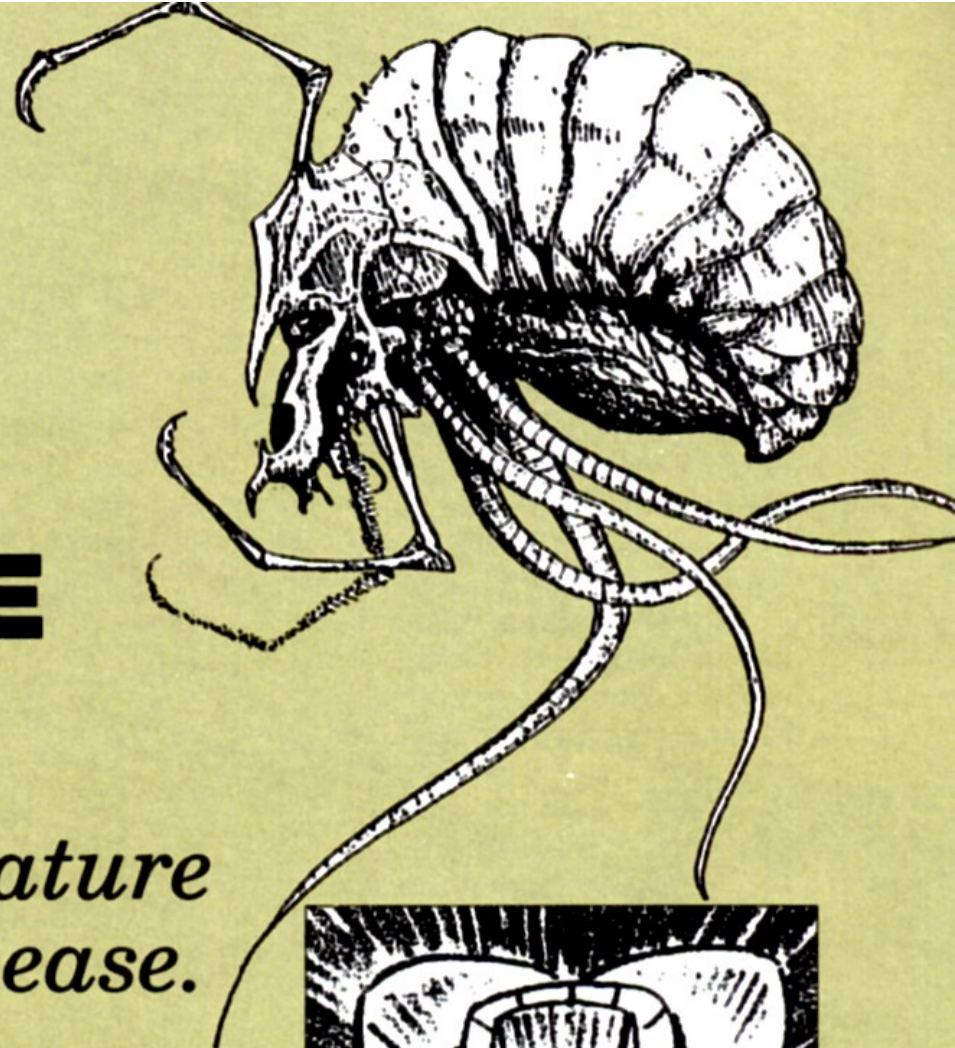
envelope a little bit."

The scene was then storyboarded and executive producer Straczynski made modifications to the script and dialogue based on the production meetings. "We shot all of the elements, the background plates and put them into the system and started to light, set-up and animate the creature from there. What we did involved an enormous amount of tweaking. We're not attempting JURASSIC PARK here, but we're definitely attempting 60% of it in terms of getting the realistic compositing.

"JURASSIC PARK really survived and looked wonderful because of the flawless compositing. People have asked me what do you think is the best computer graphics you've ever seen and that's definitely it. It's when you can't tell."

As to the future, Thornton believes that the advances in computer-generated special effects could eventually supplant the need for the dreaded rubber monster. "As a kid, I always felt cheated when a guy dressed with a load of leaves would appear on LOST IN SPACE or drenched in seaweed in VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA. The first time I completely enjoyed an alien life form was in ALIEN because a lot of thought had gone into it.

"It would be so nice to be



The creature design and storyboards for the computer graphics sequence, as the creature emerges from Kosh.

able to start to develop the non-anthropomorphic aliens. I think the stretch from this point would be to make a character. 'Grail' is the next step up from what we were talking about last year. The next thing will be to develop a character that could interact with the people in the show. That would be very interesting. How people would communicate with a non-anthropomorphic character would be very interesting."

If Thornton's track record is any indication, chances are next year at this time, we'll find out. □

Talia Winters, Psi Corps Telepath

One of the newest additions to the crew of Babylon 5 is telepath Talia Winters played by Andrea Thompson (left), a veteran of QUANTUM LEAP and FALCON CREST. "I have a lot of questions about where Talia came from and how she was taken from her parents," said Thompson of Talia's psi-corps upbringing. "The psi-corps is kind of a quasi-militaristic organization and it's

illegal to be a telepath without being registered. Wherever there's that kind of power, there will be the potential to abuse it. I'd like to see how she reacts to the psi-corps agenda because they've got

tremendous power which I think they're going to abuse."

If given the chance to become telepathic herself, Thompson would refrain. "I think it would be very frightening to be a telepath," she said. "At first, you think it would be so cool. Nobody could ever lie to me again, but then what you'd find out is mostly everybody's lying most of the time and that would be terribly disillusioning. Who could you trust? Who could you talk to? Where would you go on vacation?"

Cossacks in Space: Susan Ivanova

Assuming the role of second-in-command aboard the station is Claudia Christian (left), whose recent sci-fi stints include THE HIDDEN and Alan Spencer's BASIC INSTINCT spoof HEXED.

"The more real you can get on the show the better," said story editor Larry DeTillo, who wrote a teleplay in which the Russian second-in-command Ivanova finds out her entire family has been killed."

Noted series creator J. Michael Straczynski about giving the character an edge, "She has a cynical, Russian attitude which I grew up with and it gives me more room to play with her character."

else. In the year 2257, people will still be stupid, selfish, lustful, greedy and racist and there will still be drug and crime problems."

Despite comments made on both sides of the "star wars," between the space-station based DEEP SPACE NINE and BABYLON 5, along with STAR TREK loyalists who have decried the new series as a TREK wannabe, Straczynski sees the conflict as a non-issue. "One or two people got their noses bent out of joint about it and I could really care less. Overall, I feel we want to do the best show we can. They are two very different kinds of shows."

Although O'Hare credited the original STAR TREK with spawning the new generation of science fiction series, he also believed the comparisons are unwarranted. "The fans of STAR TREK are the ones who made this happen," said O'Hare. "STAR TREK was losing in the ratings to LOST IN SPACE. I think BABYLON 5 can tip its hat to STAR TREK since it was the first great oak tree in the forest."

Harlan Ellison vividly recalled the battle created in the press between AMAZING STORIES and THE NEW TWILIGHT ZONE, when the two anthology series began airing in the mid-1980's during a recent speaking engagement. "TV Guide decided these were the same show and they built an artificial animus between us," he said. "Unfortunately, the pinheads at the network loved that and since Spielberg had \$1.5 million and he was able to hire theatrical directors, CBS decided we had to do it too. We kept saying we're a completely different show, they're a kids' show and this is a writer's show, not a director's show, but the network made us hire directors with theatrical credits who were jerks and we wound up in a situation which was ugly, detestable and mutually destructive for both shows.

"There are other shows on

"In the year 2257 people will still be stupid, selfish, lustful, greedy and racist, and there will still be drug and crime problems."

—Actress Andrea Thompson—



Mary Woronov as Ko K'ath, the Narn diplomatic aide to Ambassador G'Kar, one of the series' new semi-regulars, prosthetic makeup design by Optic Nerve.

television that deal with life in the future and life in space," continued Ellison. "This is not one of those shows. The basic difference between this series and that series is the perception that 200 years in the future everyone will be perfect and that you can take 1100 people and jam them close together in this large tin can and nobody ever gets pissed at anybody else. I'm a big follower of the PEOPLE'S COURT, this is a paradigm for me. I believe the things we are interested in are not shattering worlds or great cataclysmic poverty problems. People are mostly concerned about the goddamned dog who came into my yard and shit all over my chrysanthemums."

Of BABYLON 5, veteran STAR TREK writer and BABYLON 5 scribe D.C. Fontana commented, "The characters have personality, humor and unexplored backgrounds, which is new ter-

ritory and opens up whole worlds of new adventure on BABYLON 5. DEEP SPACE NINE had a following because it is carrying the STAR TREK legacy on its back and I think what the producers wanted was pretty well laid out and in a holding pattern. I think this show is going to do some things that perhaps would not go on DEEP SPACE NINE."

Unlike other producers who shy away from labeling their show as science fiction, evidenced most recently with SEA QUEST, which the producers insisted on laughably calling "science future," the staff of BABYLON 5 embraces the genre, hoping to expand the staid boundaries of what has been acceptable for episodic sci-fi. "Joe sees the show as an action science fiction show," said DeTillo. "I see the show as a drama with a science fiction setting. While we'll use the gimmicks and devices and space battles, we'll also have some heavy-duty science fiction concepts."

Producer John Copeland agreed, "Telling a story is more important than all the hardware," he said. "We look at this as a period show, not a genre show. I think that's really what this is all about, bringing out our stories."

Lead Michael O'Hare, a loyal follower of the genre, thanks to his son Ben, believes BABYLON 5 is more than your average television show. "The stories have certain kinds of classical demands," he said. "The topics Joe Straczynski talks about; the idea of souls existing and the ethics of stealing them, the idea of an attempt by a planet to protect itself from invaders, which turns into a genocidal nightmare are all extremely challenging."

Although O'Hare took several knocks in the press for what some called a "wooden performance" in the pilot, he vehemently believes in the impor-

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CASTING CHANGES

New faces were brought on board after the pilot to enliven the mix.

By Mark A. Altman

Several casting changes were made from pilot to series. Gone are Johnny Sekka as Dr. Kyle and the station's three female leads, Patricia Tallman as Lyta Alexander, Blaire Baron as Carolyn Sykes and Tamilyn Tomita, who portrayed Laurel Takashima. The new additions include Richard Biggs as Dr. Stephen Franklin, Andrea Thompson as telepath Talia Winters, Claudia Christian as second-in-command Lt. Commander Susan Ivanova and Julia Nickson as Catherine Sakai. Rounding out the ensemble are Stephen Furst as Centauri Aide Vir, Susan Kellerman as Na'Toth and LOST IN SPACE's Bill Mumy as Lennier.

Series creator and co-executive producer J. Michael Straczynski is philosophical in discussing the changes. "What you have to do with an ensemble cast is look at how the unit plays together," he said. "Is the whole greater than the sum of its parts? We thought it wasn't as great as it could have been."

Casting changes were subsequently made after high-level discussions among Straczynski, executive producer Doug Netter along with producers John Copeland and Richard Compton, who directed the pilot. "We wanted to raise the energy level and try different combinations of things," said Straczynski. "We recast different actors with a different energy level."

Equally pleased with the new casting are some of those who have been permanently shuttled off duty on BABYLON 5 including Sinclair's former paramour, Blaire Baron, replaced by Julia Nickson-Soul. The actress noted that in addition to frequent television work, including a recent episode of SEINFELD, she's currently shooting the new Julia Roberts film. "I'm doing I LOVE TROUBLE and just got back from Wiscon-

sin where I shot my scenes with Nick Nolte," she said. "So much for what they know."

Of Patricia Tallman's departure, which sources reportedly indicate was due to a conflict over money, creative consultant Harlan Ellison joked at the San Diego Comics Con, "The telepath opted for other opportunities. She wasn't that good a telepath, she didn't see that she was going to be leaving the series."

Noted actor Michael O'Hare, who returns as Commander Sinclair, "I think the people who are playing the roles now are wonderful. This stuff is more demanding than certain television. You can't get away with a cigarette and a coffee cup. There are bigger demands in certain ways, bigger topics."

One of the most important changes was the replacement of Tamilyn Tomita with Claudia Christian in the key role of second-in-command. "I think it's ironic that those of us who aren't back have gone onto great success," said Baron, who points to Tomita's wonderful performance in THE JOY LUCK CLUB. "Tamilyn has gone on to do a feature film that's gotten a lot of acclaim and I don't think BABYLON 5 allowed for her to really show how talented she is. Her dialogue was so technical."

Considered for the role of second-in-command was fashion model Iman, who

Jerry Doyle (l) returns as Sinclair's right-hand security man Garibaldi, grabbing a bite with new second-in-command Lt. Ivanova (Claudia Christian).



Back is Michael O'Hare as Commander Sinclair (l) and Mira Furlan as Minbari Ambassador Delenn. The new doctor is Richard Biggs as Dr. Franklin.

played the shape-changing creature in STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY. "She wanted to do the role and we gave it some serious consideration up until the moment Claudia Christian walked into the room and blew us all up against the wall," said Straczynski. "We realized that was our character. She was a wonderful actress who knocked our socks off."

Added Straczynski, "What's been interesting about the new characters and the new actors who are playing them is how fast they're catching on and becoming part of the team. From the very first day, they've fit in wonderfully. I've gotten some new ideas about what to do with Ivanova after having Claudia come in and play the character. She brings this wonderful cynical attitude towards everything. She's always the spectator at the banquet. This should be a character driven show. The pilot was plot driven but the series is character driven."

"It's played to our benefit to have these new cast changes," said Straczynski. "In the course of one of our episodes, Sinclair asks, 'Isn't it very strange that two of our people who saw inside a Vorlon were transferred back to Earth Central in very quick time and we haven't heard from them since? Is

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FOUNDATION IMAGING

Harnessing computer graphics for special effects.

By Mark A. Altman

Ron Thornton and his team of imagineers at Foundation Imaging visualize the future on a weekly basis for BABYLON 5, creating the show's groundbreaking computer-generated special effects. Thornton's work on the BABYLON 5 pilot earned his company a prestigious Emmy Award for Excellence In Visual Effects.

Using a network of NewTek Video Toasters and standard Amiga desktop computers, Thornton turns out complex visual effects that would be impossible to achieve for television using traditional means. The Toaster's Light Wave 3D program manipulates subjects to preview perspective and orthogonal views. Surface detail, including colors, are added through texture mapping. All the information is subsequently stored on Digital Audio Tape, where it can be adjusted for scale and perspective and recomposited with different backgrounds.

"We have establishing shots that we'll use four or five episodes apart but with different foregrounds," said Thornton. "You can't generate wholly new shots for every single show."

Since the pilot was produced very little has changed at Foundation with the exception of some necessary upgrading in equipment. "We have twice as many machines as on the pilot," said network specialist and Foundation partner Paul Biegle-Bryant. "Although it seems like our render times have doubled. The pilot was done on a 3-gig server, we now have a 15-gig server." In addition, Foundation has taken over many of the re-



CGI visual effects by Valencia-based Foundation Imaging, which won an Emmy for their work on the pilot. Above: Minbari cruisers firing on the STAR WARS-inspired Delta fighters. Below: A shuttle moves alongside the Babylon 5 station.



sponsibilities of a post-production house supplanting the need for traditional Harry work in which laser beams and other visual images including mattes are composited into a scene. "We are using a lot of Mac technology for the Harry side of the production, which has dovetailed very nicely with the Amiga side," noted Bryant.

Added Thornton, "We're probably doing around 20-30 shots per episode and that includes things like composites and animation shots." On-set effects supervisor Mitch Suskin works with Thornton to supervise the shooting of needed background plates on the set. "It's a complicated show with high aspirations for the budget and schedule," said Suskin.

Given a year to refine their craft since the pilot has allowed Foundation to provide the station with greater detail. One technique that's proven helpful to Thornton in texture mapping his designs was using pieces of detail from his days as a model-maker on such films as ROBOT JOX and CAPTAIN POWER. "I have a library of pieces of details from my modelmaking days and we've put them on boards, painted them, photographed them, scanned them into the system and mapped them onto objects. It works very well.

"To a certain extent, a lot of our stuff does have a little bit of a painterly look. That's B-5's look. If I were to do another show, I would probably approach it in a different way where you make a geometry data base, print it out, make a physical object that's the same aspect ratio, paint it properly, scrape and scratch it, dirty it down, paint



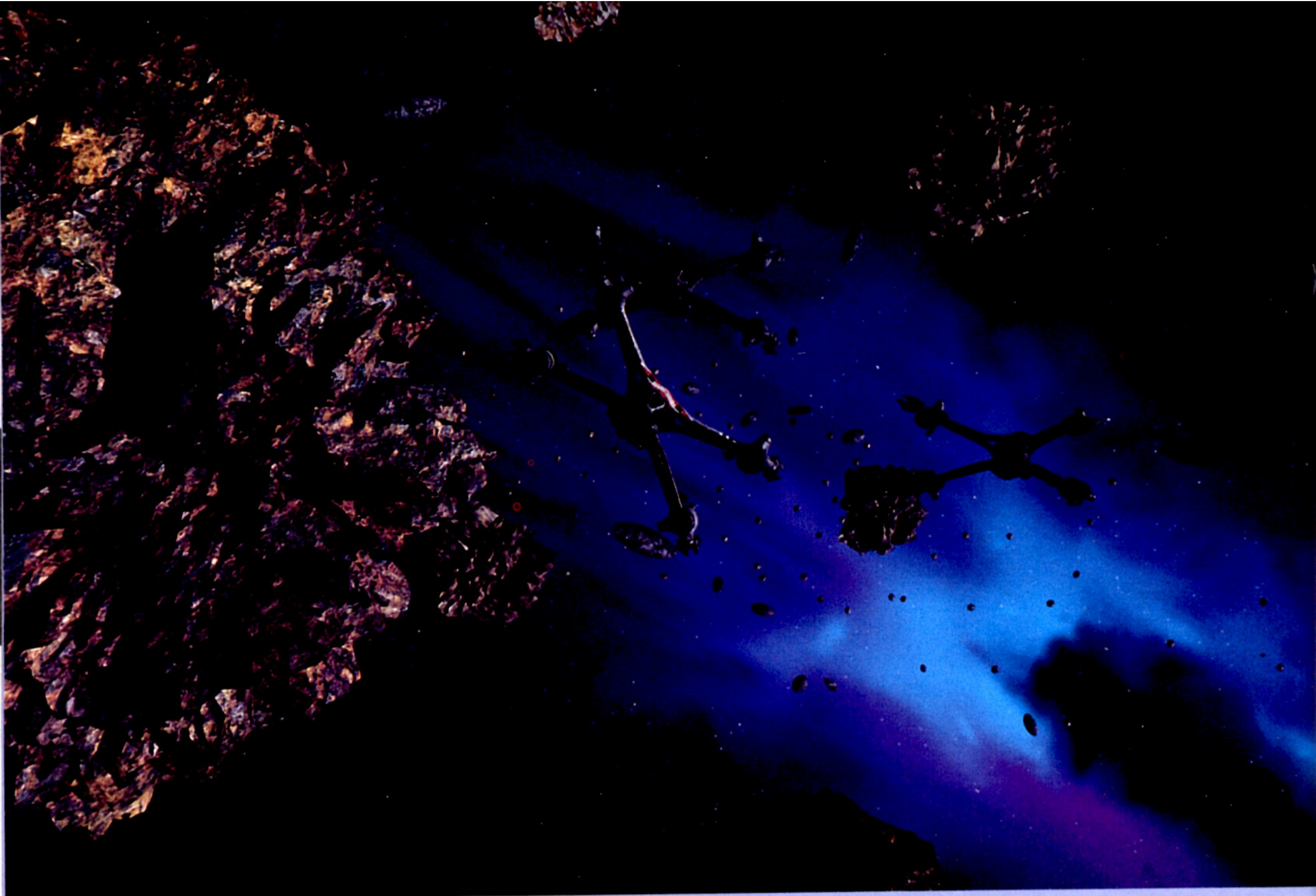
Battle in Outer Space: Delta fighters defend a cargo supply ship from alien raiders (above) as the Delta Fighter Sea Witch (below) fires on one of the intruders. Foundation Imaging uses a low-cost network of standard desktop Amiga computers.

chips off it, scan it back in and then use it as a texture map to give it a more real world look.”

One of the most impressive aspects of the **BABYLON 5** series are its fiery outer-space conflicts featuring non-aerodynamically designed fighter craft. “We wanted something that didn’t look like a shoot-em-up television game,” said Thornton. “I didn’t want to make them the **STAR WARS** Battle of Britain type stuff. It’s physically incorrect. Any kind of motion in a space environment has to be action and reaction, so we’ve come up with a compromise which has enough of the physical reality while at the same time is entertaining.”

Visualizing the explosions was equally challenging. “You can go in afterwards and change something,” said Thornton. “It’s impossible to do that if you’re going to put a squib in a model. The disadvantage is it





Sinclair and two Delta fighter wingmen fly through the asteroids, CGI effects achieved with the low-cost programming of NewTek's Video Toaster Programming.

doesn't look like flames, but it's more like what a real explosion in space would be like. Also, you can fly through the explosion and do more moves while the explosion is taking place."

Thornton points out that at times the small details are the most important in creating a visceral impact. "To depict the Battle of the Line, which ended the Minbari/Earth war, we have a shot of a helmet tumbling by that's got a hole blasted in it so

you know there was someone in there who's not living," he said. "We wanted to get that feeling that you're watching somebody dying rather than it be a Nintendo type space battle."

Another aspect of creating that reality is putting a pilot in the cockpit of the fighter whether through computer animation or compositing live action. Noted Thornton, "It's all a case of time and experimentation until we get the right look.

A lot of it is lighting. There's a scene where Sinclair is going to collide with the Minbari cruiser and he lifts his hands to his face. It's done with CG. Michael [O'Hare] does it as part of the live action and we matched it."

As for the future, Thornton is optimistic about the possibilities that lie ahead for CG effects. "Once you've done spaceship flies by left to right, spaceship flies by right to left, you want to start doing some-

thing a little more interesting," said Thornton. "One of the things I would like to see is some of the alien environments and maybe we can help with regard to creating those."

Thornton also expects that computer graphics will prove invaluable when the BABYLON 5 crew inevitably ventures off the station to planetary bodies. "I felt the whole Hoth sequence in THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK was really nice because it gave a different feel to a planetary environment. Up until that point, when anybody had gone down to an alien planet it was Vasquez Rocks. Why does it have to be a desert when you can have a world that's completely water as it was in C.S. Lewis THE SILENT PLANET? It would be great to push some of these heavier science fiction concepts. There are so many things we could do which give the writers that many more options." □

CGI at your desktop fingertips: Ron Thornton (l) and Paul Biegler-Bryant (r) at their Amiga computer workstations.



tance of the heroic image in society and criticizes the American fascination with the anti-hero. "Billy the Kid was just a disoriented, sociopath who went around killing people," said O'Hare. "He was not a hero and only becomes one when some movie star plays him. Joe Di-Maggio, Franklin Roosevelt, George Gershwin, Eleanor Roosevelt are heroes to me. Frank Capra was badly panned by the critics and he made one of the greatest movies of all time, IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE. The intelligentsia looked at it as naive."

A challenge for the entire production team is envisioning a future world of 2257. When Warner Bros picked-up the show, the producers were forced to find a new location to shoot their series. Settling on a large warehouse in Los Angeles, they converted the facility into a fully-operating mini-studio which houses the 17 standing BABYLON 5 sets. "It's equal to the two soundstages we shot the movie on and it's bigger," said Copeland. "We thought about renting the stages [used for the pilot] in Santa Clarita on a week by week basis, but you're also paying for power by the hour and they would like you to use their equipment packages so that's a lot of money for just two stages. We were able take over a new building, construct a stage wall and build all of the standing sets for less than it would have cost to rent those two soundstages. In 16 weeks, we built three soundstages, 17 sets and filmed our first four episodes."

Noted returning production designer John Iacovelli, a veteran of such film's as HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS, "Everything is revamped. One of the best things that happened is we realized that we could make the stages to fit our sets as opposed to sets that fit our stages. We knew how big the central corri-

“We took over a new building and in 16 weeks we built three soundstages, 17 sets and filmed our first four episodes.”

—Producer John Copeland—



Andreas Katsulas as G'Kar, restrained in "A Sky Full of Stars." Inset: Steve Burg's design.



dor was and we were able to build it and make it so the customs and the docking bay actually connected to it."

The 17 standing sets can be redressed to almost 40 sets, which gives the production tremendous flexibility in writing and producing their shows. "One of the things we've done which was one of the benefits of taking the time between shooting the movie and going to the series was we were able to go back and analyze all of our sets," said Copeland of the self-critical post-mortem that every department made about their work on the pilot. "We looked at what worked well and what didn't. One thing we knew we had a shortage of was corridors so we've double faced all the stuff so you can do exterior and interiors of a living accommodation and come out and carry a walk-and-talk scene. We also have transport tubes that can be moved so you can bring some-

one out anywhere in the station."

Gone are the Veralights, the operator-controlled lighting system that gave the pilot its unique film noir-ish look. "Most of the producers felt it was too dark," said Iacovelli. "The director and I liked that because we thought it added to the sense of mystery, so even now there's a constant battle. In television, it's a lot about visibility and since this isn't a comedy, the tone of the lighting doesn't need to be bright. The fact the lighting isn't bright hides a lot of our scars and fears that we don't have enough money to do this, so it hides some glaring rough edges."

The Veralights have been replaced with a system known as Intellibeams, a less expensive version of Veralights without their flexibility. "This show is a lot about choices," said Iacovelli. "We knew if we wanted it to happen, we had to guarantee a certain budget and that means making sacrifices. We are using Intellibeams, which,

to me, are not as successful as the Veralights, but maybe we'll get someday we'll get them back. Veralights are a copyrighted, patented process by one company, and they own it and have to operate it, so it's prohibitively expensive for episodic television under our budget restrictions."

It was also important for Iacovelli to have the production design reflect Earth history in the sets, preferring a weathered look to the austere, utilitarian look of shows like STAR TREK and SPACE: 1999. As it has for other recent science fiction productions, BLADE RUNNER continued to be an influence.

Commented conceptual artist Steve Burg, who's worked on both the pilot and the series, between film assignments, "The interesting thing about BLADE RUNNER is the look has everything in there. It has Mayan architecture, it's got '40s clothing. The film is the most eclectic thing in the world. It's very interesting and a big part of the

Big, Bad Narn: Ambassador G'Kar

Compare Andreas Katsulas as G'Kar to the actor's subtly menacing star turn as the One-Armed Man being pursued by Harrison Ford's THE FUGITIVE. Katsulas returns for 12 episodes as the plotting Narn ambassador in BABYLON 5's first season.

"The change in him is phenomenal," noted Andrea Thompson, who plays the station's new telepath, Talia Winters, of the transformation in Katsulas, from mild mannered actor to galactic rogue. "He stands straighter and seems about a foot taller. I told him I think he's incredibly sexy with that costume. There's something in his bearing that brings out another side of him that maybe he's not comfortable showing normally. Andreas is a pretty low-key guy and he's not an egotistical kind of person or very outgoing. He's kind of quiet, but this alien garb enables him to be this really amazing, flamboyant character. Then again, maybe it's that codpiece."

News in Space: Universe Today

The latest edition of *Universe Today* features stock quotes and a front page completely written by creator J. Michael Straczynski. "Joe wrote the headlines," noted production designer John Iacovelli. "They do directly relate to things that are happening in the text of the scripts. For instance, San Diego is still considered to be too radioactive for occupation."



5

SEASON PREVIEW

A look at what's in store, episode by episode, for the first year in space.

way it works is the way it's presented. It's an incredible movie because of the absolute conviction of the presentation which says this is the way it is."

Equally important was that **BABYLON 5** reflect realistic scientific principals. The show's bible specifically points out that such things as artificial gravity and transporters don't exist in the world of **BABYLON 5**. "One of the things from the get-go that we did in designing our approach to **BABYLON 5** was that we wanted to have a basis in physics," said producer John Copeland. "In our second episode, we have a derelict ship that comes out of the jumpgate and is out of control and tumbling erratically on a collision course with **Babylon 5**. Rather than go out with a ship and a tractor beam, we used a mechanical grappling device that is a little more understandable and a little less techno-magic."

In fact, techno-magic, or technobabble as its infamously known on **STAR TREK**, was something this science fiction show was intent on avoiding. In the series bible, Straczynski writes, "What we don't like is technobabble. If solving a technical problem illustrates a point or brings something out of one of our characters, terrific; if solving a problem just solves the problem, not so terrific. We don't want stories in which the

Filming the series, producer John Copeland on the newly constructed set of the **Babylon 5** Command Center

By Mark
A. Altman

While it is common to chronicle a season of television episodes after they have aired, it would normally be impossible to do an episode guide for a series before it completes its seasonal run. However, **BABYLON 5** isn't your average science fiction series. With a storyline that spans five years, a detailed template has already been established for the episodes to come, giving us the chance to provide a glimpse into the **BABYLON 5** universe for the coming year—before many of the episodes are even written.

"Midnight on the Firing Line"—The series premiere in which the Narns attack a Centauri outpost bringing Narn ambassador G'kar and Centauri ambassador Londo into conflict. "I have to be very careful about writing Londo and Garibaldi," said series creator J. Michael Straczynski. "They're the two loudmouths in the series. I love writing for them because I'm a pain in the ass myself. I can start with Londo and go on and on forever. He talks about his three wives: pestilence, famine and death. He's a fun character, and Garibaldi is the same way."

"Soul Hunter"—Sci-fi perennial W. Morgan Sheppherd (**SEA QUEST**, **STAR TREK VI**, **ST:TNG** "Schizoid Man," **WILD AT HEART**) stars as a wandering hunter who traps the



Robert Culp as Harlan Ellison's "Demon With A Glass Hand," visits **BABYLON 5** in "Demon On the Run," a first season show scripted by Ellison.

souls of the dying for his collection and now plans to steal the soul of Minbari Ambassador Delenn. Said Straczynski, "The first show was always meant to be 'Midnight on the Firing Line' but 'Soul Hunter' came out so well that we fought over whether that should be the first show."

The soul hunters are considered pariahs by the Minbari who believe the soul will transcend this life into another and have stopped the soul hunters from stealing the souls of their people. "I like it when things are not black and white," said Straczynski. "I like grays a lot. I like that both [the soul hunter] and Delenn are right. If the soul ends at death, he's right to preserve it, but if it goes on to something better then he's a monster. I would love to start some arguments and debates about these issues. We're doing a story which will get a lot of flack from certain groups."

"Infection"—David McCallum (**THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.**) stars in an episode in which a dangerous creature seeking biological perfection is unleashed aboard the station. "He did a good job," said Straczynski of McCallum. "He plays a xenoarcheologist who is financed by corporations to go off to alien worlds, particularly dead worlds, and look for new technology. Even though a world may be dead for 1000 years, it may still have something more advanced than ours. The

premise is these archeologists raid dead worlds for new technology and sell it to an earth corporation, get a secondary patent, and take a percentage of the profits. We used to raid natural resources, now we're raiding technology."

The seemingly unstoppable adversary infected by McCallum's discovery is played by actor Marshall Teague. Noted John Vulich of Optic Nerve, who was charged with devising the metamorphosing prosthetics for the infected creature, "We had to put a device in his chest and he becomes this kind of bio-mechanical purification drone. He's got a laser gun blaster arm. We wanted to have some cultural resonance so we gave it Samauri-like shoulder pads and a kind of Nazi helmet. We wanted an ethnic feel. On TV you don't have a lot of time to develop stories so the designs sometimes have to serve as a shorthand for conveying the

feel. If it looks like a Nazi helmet without being too obvious, it gives you that kind of guttural reaction. We really like to work within that concept of design. I think it helps move the story along a bit."

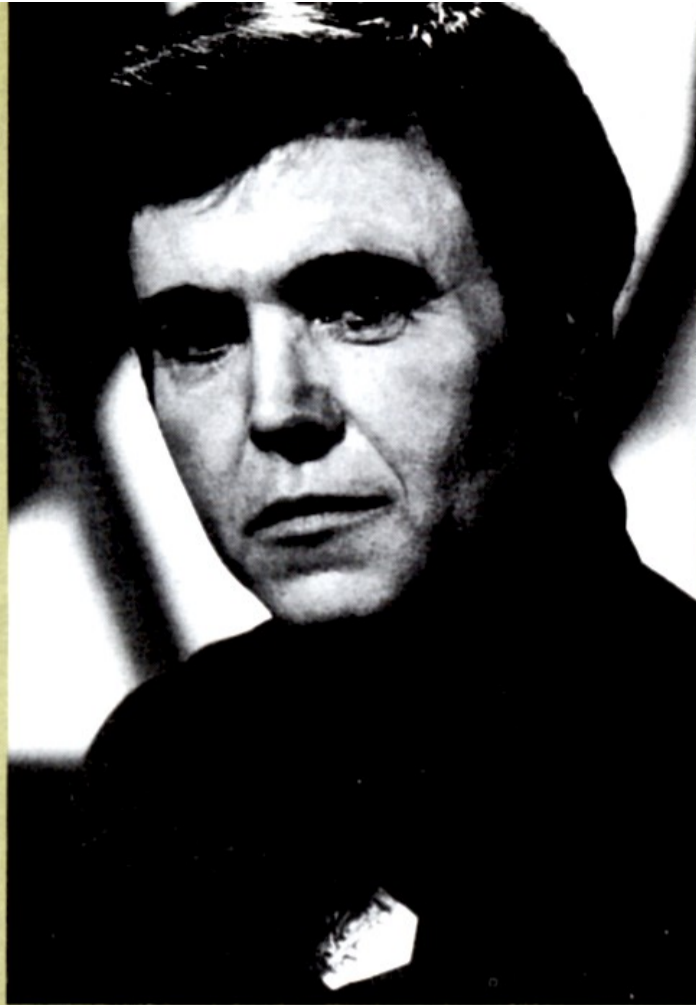
"The Believers"—Former TREK scribe David Gerrold's story about a sick alien boy whose parents resist Dr. Franklin's overtures to cure him. "I swore left, right and center I would not do a story with a kid in it," said Straczynski, whose unofficial motto for the series was "no cute robots or kids—ever." "Then David Gerrold and I cooked up a story which is going to knock people's socks off. The kid has the good graces to be sick and incapacitated for most of it. It's a very different kind of story for David. It's very intense and non-compromising—and we still haven't had any cute robots."

"Born to be Purple"—Centauri Ambassador Londo becomes the pawn of an exotic alien dancer who looks like Persis Khambatta in STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE. Laughed Straczynski, "It's a very sad thing that in the course of our show the first one who gets laid is Londo."

Added actor Jerry Doyle who was angling for a little undercover action himself, "Now isn't that wild? And a damn good love scene, too, I might add."

"Sky Full of Stars"—Officers arrive from Earth to investigate Sinclair's mysterious 24-hour blackout during the Battle of the Line. "They work for the government," said Straczynski. "Something like what Ollie North was running out of the basement of the White House. There are wheels within wheels within wheels."

"It has one thing in common with 'Midnight on the Firing Line' in that it's our second blow-out episode. We have a massive amount of effects. It's partially a flashback to the Battle of the Line and we'll see the climactic battle of the Earth/



STAR TREK's Walter Koenig stars as a Psi cop in "Mind War," as Earth's telepathic police come to Babylon 5 in pursuit of Talia's former psi mentor.

“Actors help create a myth and afterwards can't get work, and that's obscene. They should be repaid for what they've done.”

—Creator J. Michael Straczynski—

Minbari war in considerable detail."

"War Prayer"—A story in which The Homeguard, a pro-Earth terrorist group, comes to Babylon 5.

"Parliament of Dreams"—The series' first comedy, in which the various alien races aboard the station demonstrate their religious beliefs while G'kar is stalked by an old adversary. Said Straczynski, "Someone G'kar pissed off who is now dead, with his last money has hired someone to kill him. It's just balls-to-the-wall comedy when the various ambassadors are asked to showcase their religions and Londo demonstrates a bacchanalian orgy."

"Grail"—"Someone comes to the station saying, 'We looked for the grail everywhere on earth, couldn't find it, one of you guys has got to have it,'" said Straczynski of the script by old friend Christy Marx. Unfortunately, the grail search un-

leashes a tentacled monster which is visualized by some stunning computer graphics courtesy of Foundation Imaging.

"Survivors"—Garibaldi finds himself hitting the bottle again after a prolonged abstinence. "There's an accident aboard Babylon 5," said Straczynski. "Some people believe Garibaldi is responsible for it and up comes a woman who is the daughter of someone who was a friend, who she thinks died because of him and he becomes a target of an investigation which drives him back into the bottle."

Commented Jerry Doyle of his character's latest drinking bout, "Joe said to me, 'Garibaldi had a drinking problem.' And I said, 'Joe, I've never known anybody to have a drinking problem. I've known them to have a stopping problem.' Let's make the differentiation here.

"My character is irrelevant, cynical, self-deprecating and he's a lot of the comic relief in the show. I love the role I

play. I understand the character. It doesn't take a lot to draw off personal experience. We've all had triumphs and failures in the past and you just have to decide what it is about this guy that makes him get booted so many places and then get hired by a guy who has high standards and morals, Commander Sinclair. There must be something in this character the Commander sees that the character might not see. Sinclair is smart enough to know that Garibaldi cuts corners and he's a little on the high wire and might get things done that other people wouldn't by strictly following the rules."

"Mind War"—The psi cops come to Babylon in pursuit of someone who used to be telepath Talia's mentor who has been taking part in unauthorized experiments. Starring in the episode is Trekker Walter "Chekov" Koenig. "He was going to be one of the guys sent from Earth Central in 'Sky Full of Stars,'" said Straczynski.



Centauri Ambassador: Londo Mollari

Distinguished by his outrageously spiked hairdo, veteran character actor Peter Jurasik plays Londo Mollari. Reaching a look for the Centauri Ambassador required extensive research and development. "Londo was the most problematic design," said conceptual artist Steve Burg. "It's a real character, well-written character. When we did the pilot, [makeup designer] John [Criswell] was very keen to try to do one character as a fully animatronic head. Londo went from being a man with some appliances to a full-blown, extreme looking alien which would've been totally radio-controlled back to getting an actor, with little makeup. The one thing that didn't change throughout any of this, was in the first sketch [above]. I was happy to get something that extreme on a television show."

Assisting Centauri Ambassador Londo is his bumbling aid Virell, played by ANIMAL HOUSE veteran Stephen Furst (right).



He's Dead, Jim: The Medlab

Dr. Franklin (Richard Biggs) operates out of the newly redesigned medlab, below shown with Sinclair and an ailing Delenn. Part of the familiar trappings are the medical beds, which were built out of wood, laminate, plastic and aluminum by propmakers at Gene Young Effects.





The Crying Game: Ambassador Delenn

Creator J. Michael Straczynski envisioned Minbari Ambassador Delenn (above) as an androgynous character, conceived to be played by a woman with the voice altered in post production to be more masculine. Thanks to the exceptional performance of Yugoslavian-born actress Mira Furlan, the character has undergone a permanent sex change.

"We were originally going to try solid black eyes but the actress was uncomfortable with it," said designer Steve Burg. Delenn's headpiece was conceived by Burg as ceremonial costuming. Make-up artist John Criswell suggested making it a horny body growth. "It makes her more alien," said Burg. "We talked about some extreme paint jobs, in a turquoise, tropical fish color scheme."

Found in Space

Lennier, Delenn's Ambassadorial aid, is played by LOST IN SPACE veteran Bully Mummy (left). Fluent in Minbari history and conversant in half a dozen alien languages, Lennier discovers that his superior is actually a member of the Grey Council, but understands little about her secret missions.



Space Helmets

Space helmets (below) by Gene Young were outfitted with battery-operated fans and lights on the inside. Carved out of foam and coated coated with fiberglass, molds were struck for the creation of extras. Neck rings are machined from solid aluminum.



Koenig's recent heart attack caused him to be recast as a psi cop in this later episode.

Noted Straczynski of the casting, "My feeling is the STAR TREK actors did a wonderful job, helped to create a myth and afterwards could not get work. That is just plain obscene. These actors should be recognized and repaid for what they have done. Walter's going to be doing a much darker type of role than he's ever done for television."

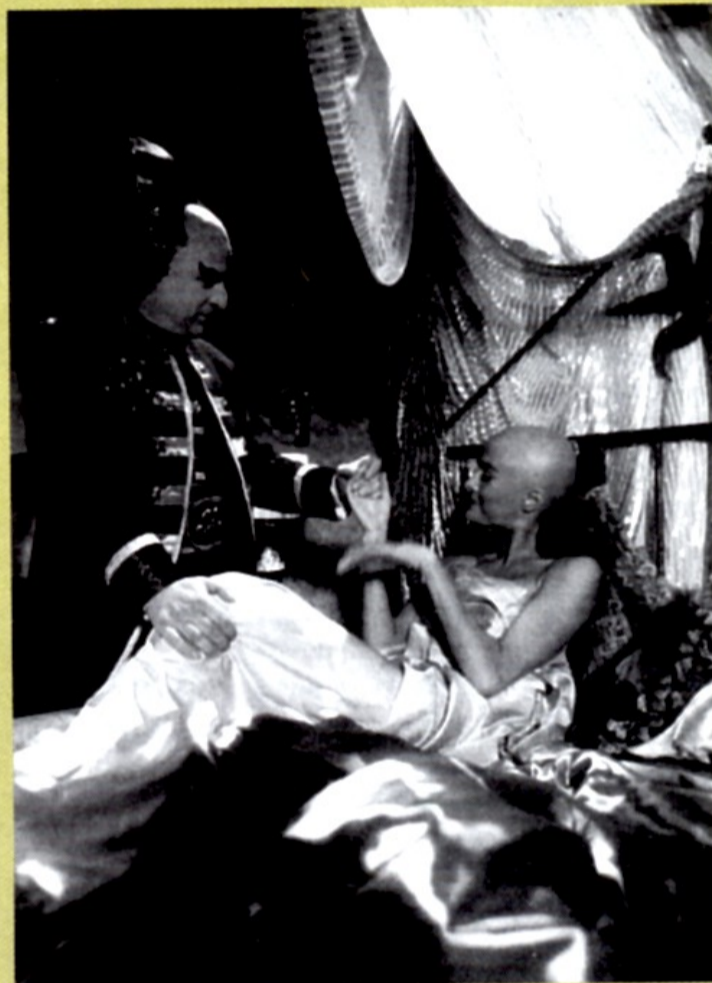
As for the sinister psi cops, Straczynski said, "Telepaths are rated p-1 to p-10. The psi cops are p-12's. They're the men in black. They don't talk to anyone, they don't have to."

"Deathwalker"—A woman is using human guinea pigs to create a formula for achieving immortality in a script by story editor Larry DeTillo. "It's a Mengele story," said Straczynski. "The difference is what if this person was a physician who has been working for a long time on an immortality project and her feeling is my race is all gone now, wiped out, but we will give you immortality and you'll have us to thank for the rest of your lives. The issue becomes one where if there was a great cancer cure from Mengele, would you use it, knowing it came from 10,000 dead babies? What's the moral implications of that."

The problem for DeTillo initially was that STAR TREK did a similar story very well in last season's "Duet." Noted DeTillo, "[Creative consultant] Harlan [Ellison] said to me he didn't think I should do the show because of DEEP SPACE NINE. I told him I really loved this area about people taking responsibility for the heinous things they've done. My problem is no one wants to take responsibility in society today. That's why we have silly senators going let's regulate violence on TV. Well, why don't you stop dropping Tomahawk missiles into Iraq and there will be a little less real violence in

“There’s something very nasty under the surface of the Psi Corps. They are the guys pulling the strings behind the scenes.”

—Creator J. Michael Straczynski—



Centauri Ambassador Londo (Peter Jurasik) becomes a pawn of alien exotic dancer Adira Tyree (Fabiano Udenio) in "Born to the Purple."

the world? You're wasting millions and millions of dollars and actually killing people.

"Harlan came up with a wonderful twist. Every time they do this story, they do it with a man. Why not do it with a woman? He mentioned the wife of the commandant in one of the Nazi concentration camps who used to make lamp shades out of the Jews. He said, 'Let's show that a woman can be a terrible person who destroys planets and experiments on living people.'"

"Legacies"—When a woman entering puberty begins to exhibit telepathic abilities, the crew must decide whether to turn her over to the psi corps. "One thing that was mentioned in the pilot by Lyta was that they've been tracking telepaths for six generations," said Straczynski. "No one noticed the sinister implications of that. If tomorrow they proved beyond

question that there were telepaths out there, the next day Congress would have 15 laws regulating them for privacy and legal purposes. In our future, if you are found to be a telepath, you have three choices; join the psi corps, go to prison, or take certain drugs for the rest of your life that inhibit your telepathic abilities. A grey man in a grey suit comes to your door once a week to give you the injection to make sure you take them. There's something very nasty under the surface of the psi corps. That thread of the psi corps ties to the whole arc of our series. They are the guys pulling the strings behind the scenes. There are military purposes to wanting to get the best telepath you can."

"Backlash"—A labor action aboard Babylon 5 cripples the station. "It's a story STAR TREK would never do," enthused Straczynski.

"Midnight in the Sunken Cathedral"—Straczynski insisted on withholding all details on an episode being written by Ellison.

"Raiding Party"—Babylon 5 has to confront the threat of pirates on the frontier in an action-oriented story. "We have a problem with raiders affecting shipping," said Straczynski. "We deal with that and introduce the first thread of something that will pay off down the line about a fifth major alien force that is only in legend. We'll get our first glimpse of them in this episode. They save Londo's ass and they give him a note, 'From friends you don't know you have.'"

Straczynski hinted that the Centauri Ambassador will face a crucial decision regarding recapturing lost glory. "Every character must be other than what they appear to be and Londo's a character who longs for his lost empire," he said. "He would do almost anything to get it back again. He is presented with the chance to bring it back, but at terrible cost. Will he



Narn ambassador G'Kar (Andreas Katsulas) and Centauri Londo (Peter Jurasik) face off in "Midnight on the Firing Line."

make that choice? The answer is yes and that will have consequences down the road which he will come to regret."

"The Resurrectionist"—Another of the few episodes about which Straczynski is tight-lipped.

"Babylon Squared"—The reason for the mysterious disappearance of Babylon 4 is finally revealed. "The ending on that story will have viewers freaked out and talking for a long, long, long time to come," promised Straczynski.

"Demon on the Run"—One of Straczynski's most intriguing ideas is to incorporate the continuity established in a classic OUTER LIMITS episode written by Harlan Ellison, "Demon With A Glass Hand." If all goes as planned, the character of Trent will find himself aboard Babylon 5.

Said Straczynski with relish, "I was thinking of what we wanted to do with the show and whether we want to cross any other universes. My feeling is no, across the board, but in that particular case [Trent comes from] 2000 years from now and thus it doesn't cross our story. We can take the point of view that it's a possible future and not a definite future. Things may happen to change it so we aren't tied to it. I think I can keep the pieces in place to make it work. The idea of Trent coming back to the '60s and having lived 200 years among mankind is a very appealing one."

Commented Harlan Ellison during the San Diego Comics Convention, "When Joe suggested this I was both charmed and surprised by it. I said, 'Who would you like to have play the part?' And he said, 'Bob Culp.'"

Shortly thereafter, I get a call from Bob Culp's agent and he said, 'We hear you're going to be doing something with Bob as the character of Trent from OUTER LIMITS and I said, 'Tell Culp to shut up and sit back because no one else on this planet will play this role but him.'"

Others have suggested Culp's son, Joseph Culp, as an alternative casting choice. The younger Culp was recently featured as Dr. Doom in FANTASTIC FOUR.

"Chrysalis"—Although the season doesn't end with a cliffhanger, Straczynski promised the finale will have major implications for the remainder of the series. "The last episode will mark a major turning point for a lot of our characters which will be carried through the rest of the show."

Lastly, Straczynski displayed a paranoia worthy of Oliver Stone (or at the very least, the STAR TREK production team) by choosing not to reveal even the titles of two other episodes.

The series wraps for the season in May and new episodes will air through January 1995 when the second season will premiere. Said Straczynski, "This is the most fun you can have with your pants on. I decided in '87 this would get produced and have never let any other possibility come into my head." □

climax is somebody suddenly deciding to reverse the polarity on the gammascope. If, for instance, some weird space-borne disease were afflicting everyone aboard Babylon 5, then we should see how that is affecting people—their fears, their frustrations, their feelings of mortality—as well as the more linear aspects of trying to find a cure (and having said that, we probably don't want any stories about weird space-borne diseases. It's been done).

For Andrea Thompson, who is the show's new telepath, replacing Patricia Tallman, who starred in the pilot, filming BABYLON 5 has been an exciting experience. "It's very unusual to come onto a show where everybody's excited about what they're doing," she said. "Nobody's making a lot of money right now, but it doesn't matter because everybody's putting 100% into their work. Everyone from the makeup department to the camera crew is really devoted to the show and the producers are incredibly accessible."

Thompson hasn't had a problem accepting the premise of alien civilizations trying to find a way to peacefully co-exist as she already finds the notion of extraterrestrial civilization a very credible concept. "I've al-

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Breaking the "no kids" rule: Tharg (Stephen Lee) and son Shon in "The Believers," the story of a sick alien.



The biomechanoid nightmare of "Infection," marauding through the station's cargo bay, a riff on ALIEN's idea of biological weapon's research gone awry.





MAKEUP EFFECTS

Ambitious low-budget designs by Sylmar-based Optic Nerve.

By Mark A. Altman

Optic Nerve, the Sylmar-based makeup company founded by John Vulich and Everett Burrell, was hired to create alien races week after week for *BABYLON 5*. Having worked on a wide range of projects, their advanced facilities allow them to mill, lathe, weld, mold and vacu-form elements to successfully create credible creatures *fantastique*. Noted Optic Nerve co-founder Vulich, "The producers of *BABYLON 5* don't want to be quite as sedate as *STAR TREK*, but they don't want to be quite as wacky as *STAR WARS* in their tone—Jabba the Hut's lair in *RETURN OF THE JEDI* was very cartoony—and that seems to fit our sensibilities pretty well."

That doesn't mean *BABYLON 5* will have a paucity of alien beings. In its first few episodes, Optic Nerve has already created a plethora of extraterrestrial oddities including a fully functioning animatronic lizard-like godfather, N'grath, Morgan Shepherd's soul-stealing Soul Hunter, a myriad of literal lounge lizards, alien ambassadorial aides and visitors from the non-aligned worlds. "They definitely don't mind seeing entire suits and things like that," said Vulich, "but they do want to keep a realistic tone, without it being too cartoony."

Vulich and Burrell have run the gamut in their work since opening Optic Nerve in 1989. They've worked on everything from big-budget films like *GLORY*, *BATMAN RETURNS* and *THE DARK HALF* to smaller, low-budget efforts such as Concorde's *DRACULA RISING* and *FANTASTIC FOUR* where their design for Ben Grimm's Thing earned them kudos from fans who were impressed with the faithfulness of the bargain-basement design to the comic book. However, none of their work quite prepared them for the grueling schedule of a hectic television pace.

"When I was a little kid, I watched *LOST IN SPACE* to see the new alien of the week and when you realize that's going to be one of the attractions for people watch-



Marshall Teague, transforming in "Infection," the subject of an unscrupulous biological experimenter.

ing *BABYLON 5*, you want to give 110% to this," said Vulich. "At the same time, the production will lose 2-3 hours a day with an actor so they'll be happy if you can just do a nose piece and a half-hour makeup. They want to tie the actors up as little as possible, but at the same time they realize that's one of the attractions of the show."

Vulich smiled when he contemplated the dilemma faced by him and Burrell when they took over the show's special effects from Criswell Productions, who handled the creation of the makeup effects for the pilot. They knew they immediately wanted to avoid the "forehead and nose" syndrome of *STAR TREK*'s aliens. "That was our big goal right off the bat," said Vulich. "We don't want to do just foreheads—but after doing three episodes, we found ourselves doing just foreheads out of necessity. The time's just not there to do anything else."

For Vulich, the competition on the final frontier is a friendly one. It serves as motivation for Optic Nerve to exceed their own high standards. "We're really trying to outdo *STAR TREK*," he said. "Not in a competitive way, but because we're the new kids on the block. We want to create our own little niche and draw attention to what we are doing. Mike [Westmore]'s done some pretty impressive work [on *STAR TREK*] considering the limitations of television, especially during the last few seasons. Quark and Odo are really nice makeups on *DEEP SPACE NINE*. I think it's healthy competition. I think we've got half the budget and we're trying to do twice as much with half the amount of resources on *BABYLON 5*. We're a growing company so it's worth it to us. Everett and I work



Funny Foreheads—Part 2: Andreas Katsulas as G'Kar (above) in makeup by Optic Nerve. Below: Ock, the proprietor of the nightclub on *Babylon 5*.





Teague, fully transformed by Optic Nerve into a biomechanical purification drone, with blaster arm.

seven days a week to get this stuff done and a lot of it's on our time, but it's really a chance for us to show what we can do."

In order to meet the assembly line-like demands of episodic shooting on *BABYLON 5*, Vulich and Burrell have perfected several modular designs for their prosthetics allowing an appliance to be used differently for several aliens. "What we do is put a face onto one of our basic molds and then we add fins or ears as we go. It's almost like Mr. Potato Head, when we don't have time to go all out. We'll do a whole head if it's a real specific design."

For instance, Optic Nerve has created a generic Narn headpiece used for the back of a Narn. Said Vulich, "We just put a different piece on top of it. It's almost like a diving mask hood where your face shows through and we just pop that live cast on and blend it off onto the back."

Optic Nerve also makes use of a small group of regular SAG actors they use to play

background aliens. "We already have their molds so we can just put them on fairly quickly. It helps save a lot of time," said Vulich. In order to expedite the application of makeup on the show's alien contingent of ambassadors, Vulich and Burrell have also made several changes to the original Criswell prosthetics. Noted producer John Copeland, "One of the things they did with G'kar was make the chin less blocky and more like an anatomical structure. It blends in with the area around his mouth and looks less like a prosthetic. We've also gone with some redder contact lenses. We've taken everything we loved about these guys and brought it forward just a little bit more. With Londo, they have a whole different way of designing his wig. They actually made a wig.

"One of the things we've done with Mira [Furlan as Delenn], which was very tough on her, was the headpiece. The bone portion was made out of a very tough prosthetic so they made the new one out of foam and went back a little more to Steve Berg's original design, which gives it a graceful quality."

The application time on the various alien ambassadors is surprisingly varied. Peter Jurasic's Centauri, Londo, requires two hours in the makeup chair as does Furlan's transformation into Delenn. Surprisingly, one of the shortest application times is for G'kar—Andreas Katsulas only spends an hour and a half in makeup.

Vulich and Burrell devised a more efficient system to apply G'Kar's makeup. "His is almost a full head mask," said Vulich. "On the pilot they did a new mask everyday and had to repaint it. They were just up against the wall as far as how much time they had. We did a full mask, but we have inset pieces that we use over and over again so we can re-use the head several times. That actually makes it a less timely makeup. Oddly enough, it takes less time because you're just popping in pieces whereas on Delenn and Londo you have a lot more stuff to blend off and it's a lot more subtle. There



Getting away from the look of humanoid aliens, sculpting the design for N'Grath, the station's insectoid mob boss. Inset: The finished puppet.

are less wrinkles and spots to hide the makeup in."

Vulich admitted that Katsulas was initially wary of making any changes in G'kar's makeup. "Andreas was really happy with the original makeup and he liked the design of it," said Vulich. "He wanted us to copy it as closely as possible. We had to go through a lot of little changes and we worked with him a lot. It was hard to get across to him that the paint scheme was a lot of what the makeup's about once it's on his face because he was looking at clay sculptures and felt the makeup really helped him act a certain way and that if we weren't going to match it close enough, it might affect his performance. He was really concerned about it. But once we got the first test done, I think he saw it all together with the color and the lenses and it all kind of came back to him so he was really comfortable. That's the one we agonized most over.

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Makeups by Optic Nerve: Pak'Ma'ra (left), of Melat, a planet of philosophers. Cascor (center), a native of Ji'v and a member of the council of non-aligned worlds. Morgan Shepherd as the "Soul Stealer" (right).





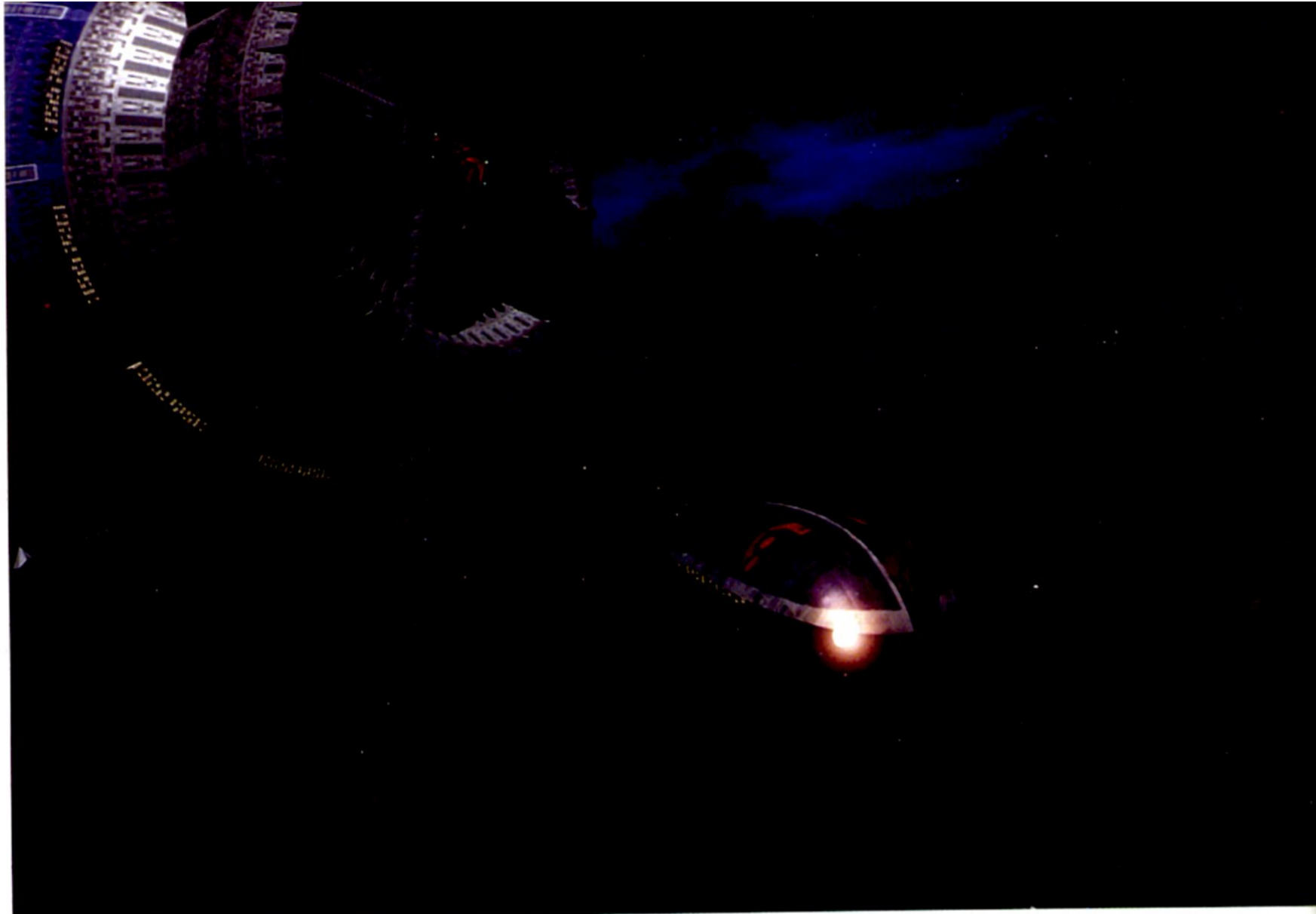
Illegal Alien: Ambassador Kosh

The mystery of exactly what is inside Steve Burg's Vorlon encounter suit design will be revealed in the series. "There were certain requirements that [series creator] Joe [Straczynski] stipulated that the suit have," noted Burg, the conceptual designer. "It had to be very massive in the upper body and shoulders and very mysterious so that it concealed the true nature of these creatures.

"They had very little money or time to make this thing, so [effects supervisor] Ron Thornton thought of the idea of focusing on an interesting head and making the rest of the Vorlon wardrobe. I designed this big collar and a very simple helmet. The rest of it was simply a robe."

Signs of The Time

Contributing to BABYLON 5's unique brand of science fiction reality is the wealth of advertising material and signage dotting the walls of the station. The series makes use of many of illustrator Ted Haigh's original designs for the pilot. "We're doing a lot more with signage," said producer John Copeland. "Ted was working on a movie, so he wasn't available to work on the series, but we have very gifted people in the art department who have carried on." Below, an ad in Centauri, art by Haigh and David Martin.



A Centauri transport arrives at the Babylon 5 docking bay, computer graphic visual effects by Valencia-based Foundation Imaging, bringing a new look to television science fiction on a stringent TV series production budget and time schedule.

ways believed that there is a lot more out there," she said. "They're just watching and waiting until we pull our act together. I mean we're always blowing up bombs and fighting each other so they're probably waiting until we get together on our own planet. As a kid, I dreamed of going into space. I dreamed of being an astronaut. We used to turn over all the furniture in the basement and make a lunar landscape like we were astronauts. When STAR TREK came along, we were all incredibly into it."

In fact, in the course of BABYLON 5's saga viewers will learn that our planet's first contact with an alien civilization was the Centauri who came to Earth on the pretense that humans were a genetically-related lost Centauri colony. The Centauri provided Earth with information regarding starflight and space travel in exchange for cultural and mineralogical riches, allowing human civilization to advance several centuries in their space technology. Straczynski even jokes that he'd like to have a scene straight out of the *Weekly World News* where a character sues an alien for damages, claiming that their

“I dreamed of going into space, of being an astronaut. We used to turn over the furniture in the basement and play lunar landscape.”

—Actress Andrea Thompson—

race visited the Earth centuries before, abducting and impregnating one of their ancestors.

Earth will continue to play an important role in the stories to come despite being light years away from the Babylon 5 station. "We aren't just leaving it behind," assured Straczynski. "Our first episode has a running sub-thread about the election of the Earth Alliance President and there's stuff happening back home with Homeguard, which is a pro-Earth terrorist group which has been growing in influence and power. We're going to find out what the influence of the psi corps is as well. The politics back home, including budget cuts and alien immigration, will all come to fruition in the series."

Other issues Straczynski intends to address are aspects of human civilization which commonly are ignored in televised

science fiction. "One thing I want to deal with is the topic of religion from time to time," he said. "I'm an atheist, but you cannot deny that in 2000 years of human evolution, religion has been with us and to think it has vanished is foolish. If you were in the '30s writing about 1993, it's still valid to talk about religion and that is still a futuristic story."

Another frequently taboo topic in science fiction programming is sex, which Straczynski hopes to deal with as well. "What would it be like making love to a telepath?" pondered Andrea Thompson. "She'd already know what you wanted to do before you did it."

Straczynski's plans to address sexual politics may also result in controversy since Thompson revealed that she was told by Straczynski that her character will be bisexual. "I think for Talia that's a natural way to go," offered the actress. "If you've ever read stories about strippers or prostitutes, 75% of them are gay. It's not that all men are dogs, it's just that they've seen too much of their dark side and I think because Talia has this unique ability to see into people's minds, it's only natural. L.A. LAW had

5

DESIGNING THE FUTURE

Production designer John Iacovelli on set design.

By Mark Altman

Unlike the sets for the *BABYLON 5* pilot, which needed to last through the ten weeks of filming, the new sets for the series will need to endure considerably longer. Their design and construction was overseen by production designer John Iacovelli, who fulfilled the same role on the series' pilot. "We could fit two soundstages on the pilot onto one of our big soundstages," said Iacovelli of the 60,000 square-foot facility in Los Angeles which serves as the new home to the *BABYLON 5* production team.

"I knew a key to making this successful financially was not having to fold and hold and bring up the sets and put them

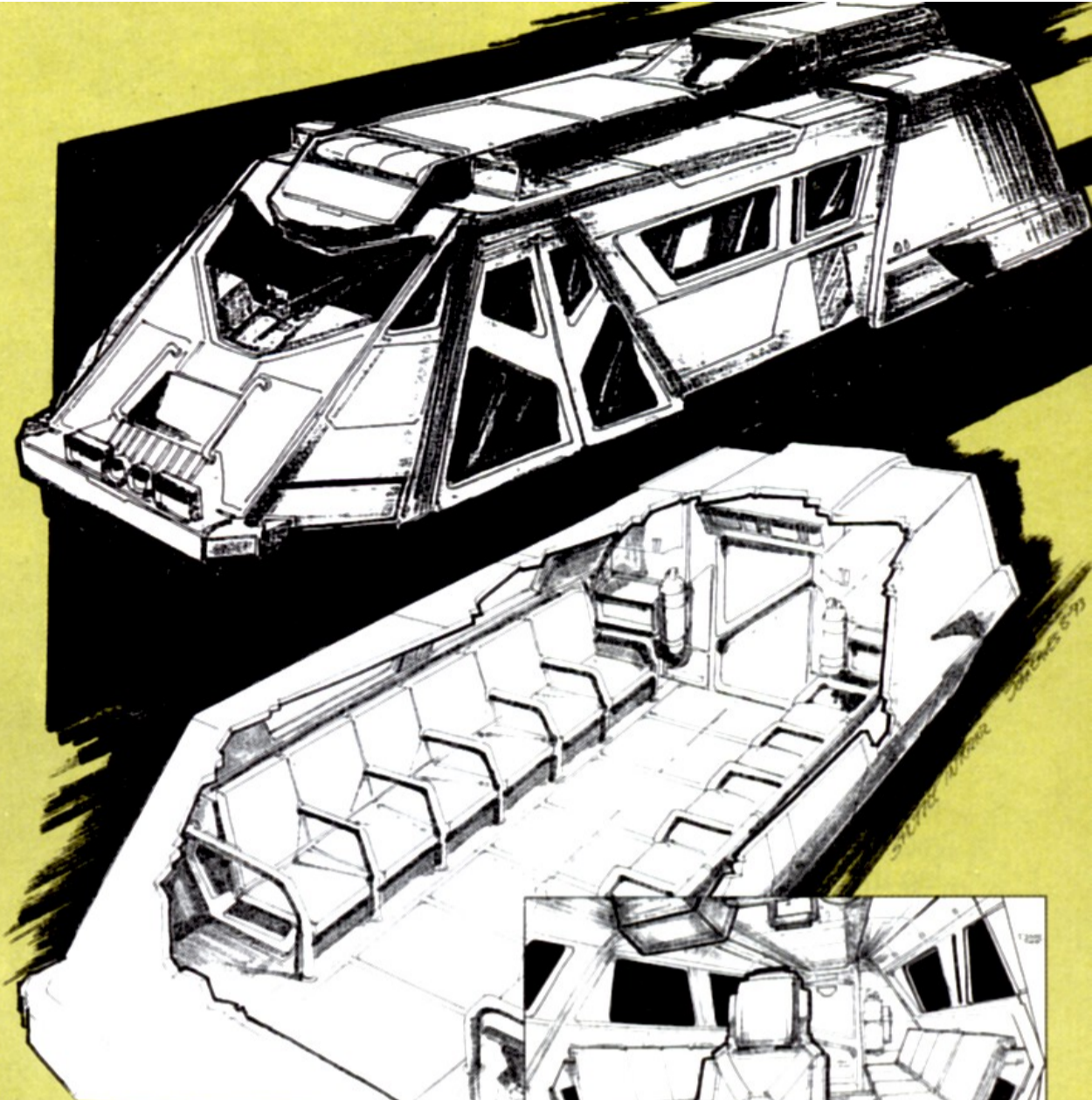
Iacovelli, designs and cardboard set mockup in hand, upgrading the look of the pilot with permanent standing sets.



down again," said Iacovelli of the costly procedure of striking and re-building sets in a smaller production environment, as was the case for the pilot shot on soundstages at the Santa Clarita Production Center. Instead, the new facility, a renovated warehouse, boasts three large soundstages, adjacent to the show's production offices, which house 17 standing sets.

Noted Iacovelli, "A lot of our a.d.s and directors have worked on episodic television for years and they can't remember a show with this many standing sets. We knew this would be a way to do it cheaper. On the pilot, we worked quite a few all-nighters and here that hasn't happened. The minute we drove in the parking lot, we knew this building would make our lives easier. It had enough space for stages and shops. We shoved as much into them as possible while still keeping it safe and shootable."

Renovating an empty warehouse was necessitated by the fact that there was a dearth of available studio space in Hollywood due to a production crunch. To rent a pre-existing facility meant splitting up shooting between two locations which wasn't feasible for the cash-constrained production. "NBC built a new soundstage when they had *SANTA BARBARA* because they knew they couldn't fit it on their existing soundstages. It's not unheard of," said Iacovelli. "The money that we save in rentals went to



John Eaves' new design for the shuttle that runs along the central core of the *Babylon 5* station's six-mile length. Inset: Steve Burg's original interior.



construction."

The construction took 16 weeks, during which the building was transformed into the home of the futuristic *Babylon 5* spacestation, including adding lighting platforms, soundproofing, office space and dolly track. "We don't have a lot of floorcoverings," said Iacovelli. "We painted a concrete floor and thank goodness it was in such good shape. On some sets it's smooth enough to dolly on."

From the beginning, it was determined the architecture of *BABYLON 5* would have its roots in traditional earth design. "If you look at a lot of the elements of *BABYLON 5* in the wardrobe and in the art design, there's a link to '30s and '40s styles and Moderne," said producer John Copeland. "John Iacovelli is a strong believer in having architecture and technology rooted in the past and we've incorporated that into our future."

It was decided that most of the sets would be three wall sets since production rarely necessitated building a full set except for the station's massive central corridor. When a scene requires a fourth wall, generic kluge walls can be moved into place.

The need for so many standing sets was a result of the financial constraints involved in creating new sets on a weekly basis. *BABYLON 5*'s limited budget doesn't provide for many swing sets. "We really can't come up with new sets all the time, but we want to re-use the sets we have in interesting ways and we can add sets eventually," said Copeland. "We saw what worked well for us which was the chase corridors and the gritty down-below area. What didn't work well, which is what everyone is now calling the 'petting zoo,' was when Sinclair and Lyta look at the different aliens which was specially designed to fulfill the needs of that one line of Sinclair's in the pilot where he's taking Lyta through the alien sector and describing it. It really sent the wrong kind of message that we don't live with these people, that they're separated, almost like in a zoo. We wanted to get away from heavy use of puppetry on the pilot which didn't pay off."

Among the decisions made in pre-planning were to build extensive corridors which can be used for 'walk and talk' scenes as well as chases. In ad-



Outer Space Top Guns

Although the cockpit of the Babylon 5 fighters exists on the show's soundstages where live action footage of the pilot's are filmed (above) most of the work in envisioning the futuristic fighter craft is done in the offices of Foundation Imaging where the computer generated special effects are created.

"We have a very unique way to launch them," said producer John Copeland. "They swing down and the centrifugal force of the station turning, hurls them out into space before they hit their engines."

The station houses several squadrons of small fighters. Noted Copeland, "The ships are roughly about the size of a medium bomber during the second world war. There's nose art on them that Ron [Thornton] has designed, one with this incredible mermaid called the Sea Witch."

Alien Mobster: N'Grath

N'grath (left) is an insectoid alien whose nefarious business dealings on Babylon 5 help keep him—her, it—under the watchful eye of Security Chief Garibaldi.

"It could have just been a mask on somebody, but we wanted to build a whole suit," said Optic Nerve's John Vulich. "Originally, N'grath was planned for just a few episodes, but it was early in the season when they saw it, and they began writing it in more, realizing it was something they could get some production value out of."

"The design gets away from what you see on STAR TREK. Everything there is pretty humanoid and that's one of the things we try to get away from design-wise."

dition, most of the sets are built double-sided, serving as part of a set on one side and built as a corridor wall on the reverse. "One thing we learned was we never had enough corridors," said Iacovelli. "There are more corridors I'd still like to have, although we're already out of space so we'll have rework or tear down things."

Other sets are embellished with computer graphics from Foundation Imaging, as is the case with the Zen garden, which can be redressed as a restaurant. Noted Copeland, "There's a cut-in piece we put in specifically so Foundation could put the matte edges in. The set itself is above eight feet. The Zen garden originally cost more, but we couldn't have live plants because it would be coming back week after week and we couldn't afford to rent silk plants. We ended up making the plants ourselves. The same with the vacuform wall panels from art deco patterns we used in all the corridors."

BABYLON 5 uses a type of modular production design that was pioneered on NBC's BUCK ROGERS where the sets were multi-purpose. Almost every set of BABYLON 5 can serve as another location with the exception of Sinclair's quarters and the observation dome.

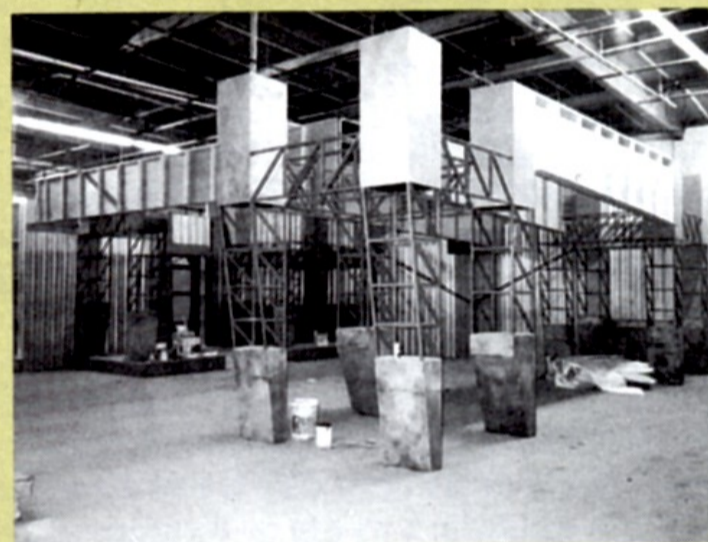
Stage A houses the central corridor which also doubles as the *zokolow*, the station's shopping mall. "When it's the central corridor it's basically a typical corridor that rings the outside of the station and when it's the *zokolow* there are walls that pop away that storefronts pop out of and then there is a little bar and restaurant that goes in at the end of it," explained Iacovelli. "There are two floating ceiling pieces that come down into it and we can change that over in 30-40 minutes so they can shoot it as the central corridor and then later shoot it as the *zokolow*. That has a traverse corridor that goes to the customs area which is where people enter and leave the sta-

“The look is much more the Stealth-like technology we wanted than the pilot where we rented all our consoles from Modern Props.”

—Designer John Iacovelli—



The massive cargo area of the station's docking bay used for action scenes. Below: Under construction.



tion, which redresses as a meeting room."

Also on Stage A is the docking bay. "That is my favorite new set," said Iacovelli. "The docking bay and cargo hold are basically an action set. It's a big empty space with a lot of steel in it and some vistas we can redress. It has markings on the floor as if it's the flight deck of an aircraft carrier. We also have space on this stage to put a small swing set. The observation dome, which we improved by adding a little office for Sinclair, is also on this set. It's much more about the stealth technology we wanted than the pilot where we rented all the consoles from Modern Props."

Stage B is dubbed the "action stage" by crewmembers since it houses a series of mazelike corridors along with airlocks and dilapidated machinery. "The

running, fighting, falling, and blowing up happens here," said Iacovelli. "It can also eventually be redressed as the bazaar."

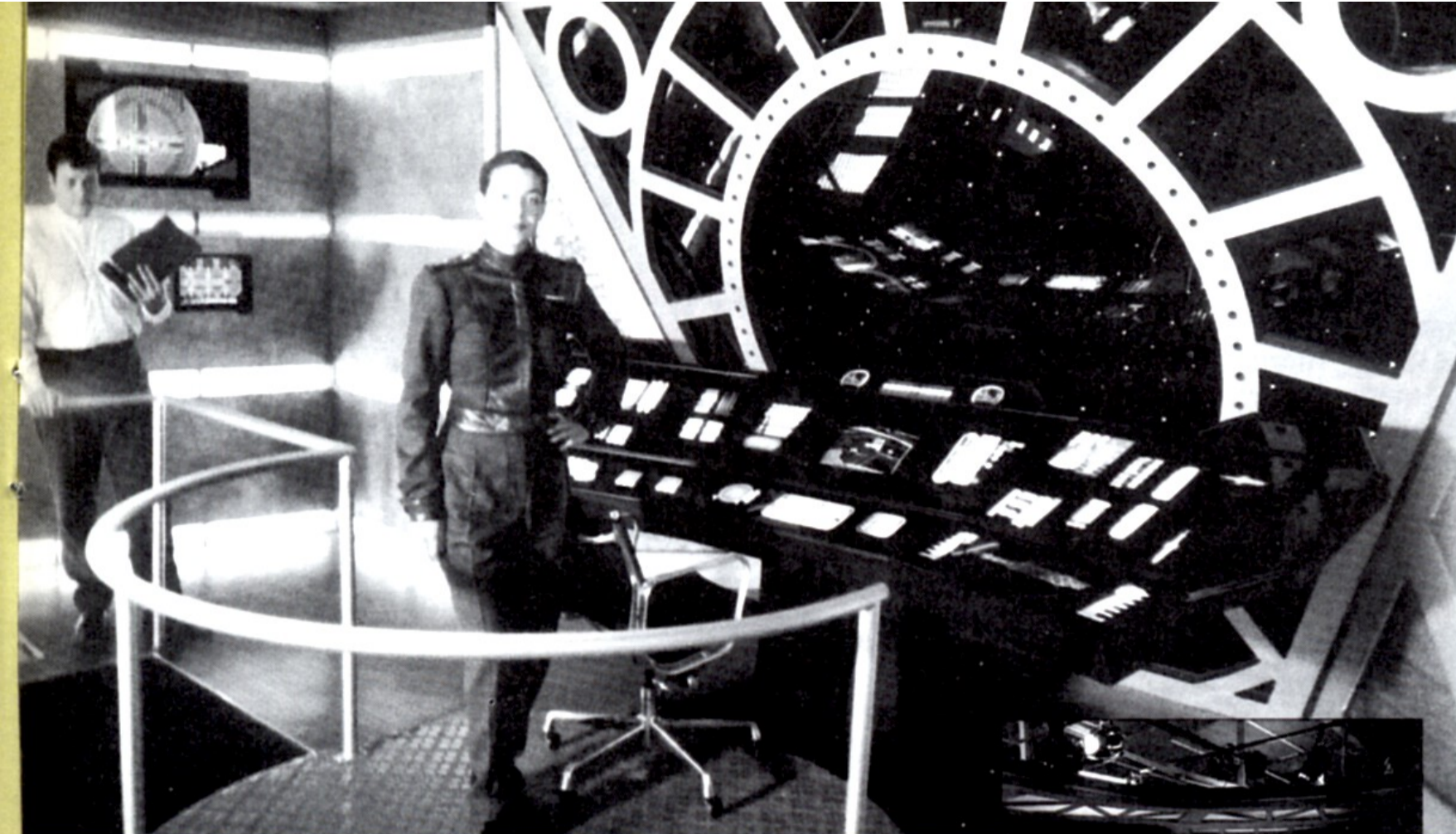
"Our down-below area also functions as where those who are not as affluent as others live," said Copeland, "and also as unfinished areas of the space station. One of the things we've discovered in making the movie was how much corridor space you need for chase scenes. We've got miles of corridor configured for different looks." Also on Stage B is the fighter cockpit where live action is shot with actors to be mapped into the computer-generated space battles. There is also some extra room for the construction of swing sets.

The last stage is C Stage on which most of the drama occurs. It houses a smaller collection of sets, including the casino which can be redressed as the Dark Star Nightclub and the med bay. "It's more enhanced from what it was in the pilot," said Iacovelli. "We added an office for the doctor although the isolab is as it appeared in the movie."

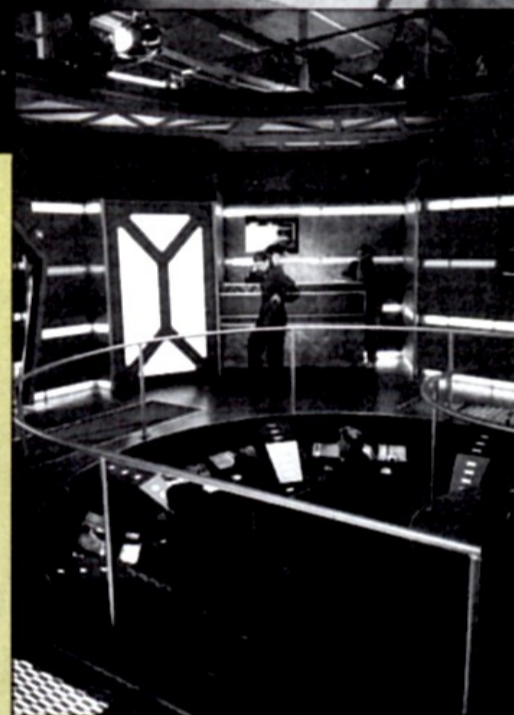
Additional sets on Stage C include the Zen garden, which also serves as the restaurant and the ambassadorial quarters; alien corridors and the council chamber set, which redresses as a meeting room, mess hall, conference room,

The corridor to customs and the station's secure zone, part of Stage B.





Claudia Christian as Russian Lt. Ivanova (above) on Iacovelli's new standing set of the station's command center, constructed inside a converted warehouse.



a bisexual character, but I think it's a first for a show like this. I have absolutely no qualms in playing it and, in fact, I really embrace the opportunity. It's a part of society. There are so many gay and lesbian couples who are looking for recognition—so I think showing something like this totally legitimizes it, which is fine because to me love is love whether you're loving another man or another woman. A committed couple is a committed couple whether they're recognized by the law or not. As long as it doesn't involve animals or children, it's all fine."

Harlan Ellison, not surprisingly, cut to the chase when speaking in front of a convention about the issue. "You got to understand, 200 years in the future, sex between humans is going to be very mild," he said. "It's between aliens and humans that you're going to have a problem. If you have a wife who happens to be a methane breather, you're going to have a hard time making restaurant reservations."

As for venturing off the space station, Straczynski isn't encouraging the writers to visit any alien worlds in the near future. "If you do a show set in Los Angeles, you don't have to find a justification to go off to Las Vegas every time," he offered. "That's where your story takes place. We have a quarter

Garibaldi's security office and Sinclair's ready room. "It's the one set that does the most double duty," said Iacovelli.

Almost all the sets feature a curved architecture to reflect the exterior design of the station. "There are very few right angles because in a curved structure, you're not going to have them," said Copeland. "In almost every science fiction show before, there's been the same kind of

Lessons learned on the pilot led to massive corridors for action staging.



architecture that we live with because the feeling was it costs more to do things that are unusual, but it doesn't."

One of the most highly detailed sets on Stage C is Sinclair's quarters, which is not redressed for other uses. "It doesn't pay to switch it out," said Copeland. "We have a lot of personal mementos on the wall. There's a Sinclair Aircraft sign, establishing the backstory of his family's link with aviation.

One of Iacovelli's favorite sets is a science fiction first, the bathroom. "We like it because it was mentioned in *TV Guide*," he laughed. "It uses kluge walls, which are stock walls we developed. There are different kinds of urinals for different species."

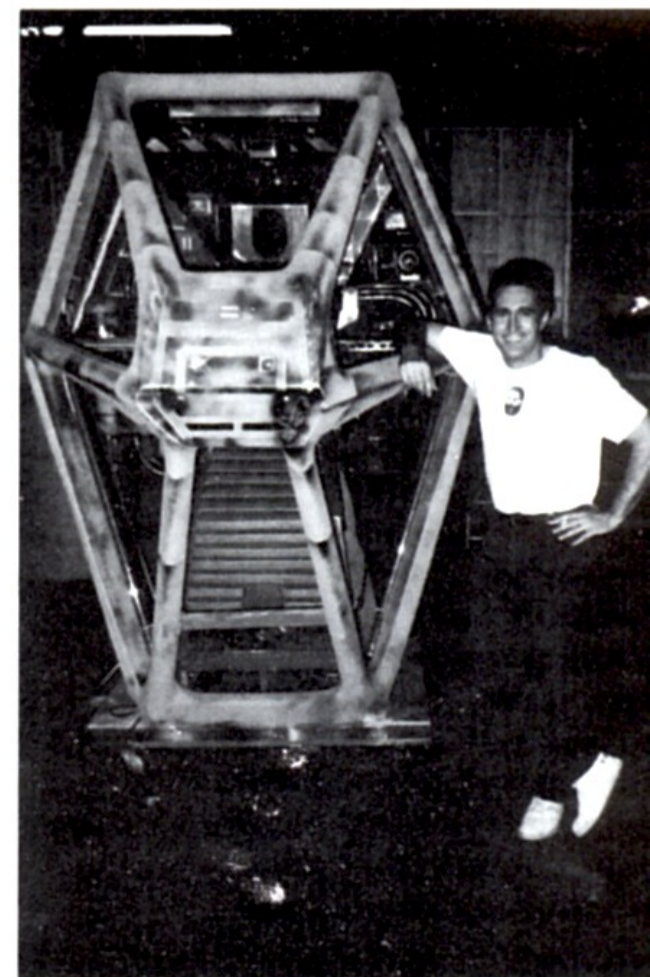
The transport tube, which allows the characters to move throughout the station, can similarly be moved between stages. "You can be in different places and come out of the same elevator," said Iacovelli. "We've simplified our rigging and the way to get in and out is through a card entry rather than a palm entry."

Despite the changes since

the premiere, many sets are variations of locations constructed for the pilot which have been rebuilt. "We never thought we'd use so much scenery from the pilot because we built it so fast and used it so many times and never thought we'd be putting it back up," said Iacovelli. "I have to say that there is some disappointment because you want it to be everything it could be and when the money isn't there you have to think of it in a new way. We can't really build that many swing sets. For instance, in 'Believers' the med-bay recovery room is kluge walls set in a semi-circle with a curtain and a slide table for the boy to sit on with a piece of carpet."

As for the variations in the sets, which will no doubt be noticed by some of the show's more ardent admirers, Iacovelli offered a reasonable assurance. "We felt we could take liberties from the pilot as long as we kept the spirit of the sets. It's a year later in the life of the space station and we feel this is a place that's constantly changing and being upgraded." □

Michael O'Hare poses next to the cockpit set on Stage B, used to film live-action inserts for CGI effects.



Harlan Ellison: The Ombudsman

The Ombudsmen serve as "judges" aboard Babylon 5 to hear civil complaints ranging from bad business deals to petty crimes. Assessing penalties under Earth law, they are also fluent in alien legal systems.



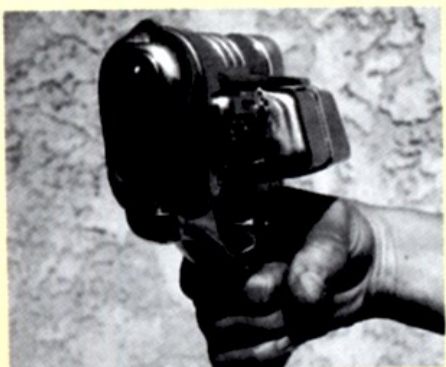
Noted series' creative consultant Harlan Ellison, "William Faulkner said when he accepted the Nobel Prize the only thing worth the blood and anguish of writing

is the study of the human heart in conflict with itself. That's what this series is about. It has all the whistles and toots you want from a science fiction series, but at its core is the study of the human heart in conflict with itself.

"These people urinate, they get in fights and occasionally they talk like they have a stick up their asses because they're military, but basically they're just people who get into problems with each other, which is why there is an Ombudsman on the station who spends all of his time on these petty miserable problems."

All Aboard: Boarding Pistol

Used for boarding alien ships, BABYLON 5's boarding pistol was designed and built by Ed Kline and Gene Young for the series premier, "Midnight on the Firing Line." Producer John Copeland followed production designer John Iacovelli's recommendation to hire Young for the series. "Michael O'Hare loves our stuff," said Young. "They had him so wired up on the pilot he was afraid he would be electrocuted if he went to the bathroom. We built everything to be self contained."



million residents, 14 recurring and regular characters, all with their own agendas. We have a huge soup of drama we can dip into whenever we want. We also have the garden set and the fresh air restaurant which will be large and open and we'll be doing a lot of heavy duty outside effects shots of planets and shuttles going back and forth and some battle scenes that are going to be amazing."

Advances for next season should include new leaps in CGI technology which will allow for prosthetic creatures to be replaced by computer animation. "We're going to try a little of it in 'Grail,'" said Straczynski. "We're going to ease our way into it. [Visual effects supervisor] Ron [Thornton] has some new software which will allow us to do what JURASSIC PARK did. We're going to have computer-generated aliens who look very real."

As a result, the puppetry and animatronic creatures of the pilot are being phased out, part of the reason Criswell Productions, which did the makeup on the telefilm, were replaced by Optic Nerve. "We're deemphasizing the animatronic creatures," said Straczynski. "Some didn't work out. We think the CGI can give us good stuff and I want tests done so we can try it on a small scale first and see if it works."

Ron Thornton, the special effects wiz behind the computer-generated special effects hopes to have the opportunity to design new ships for the various warring factions inhabiting the BABYLON 5 universe. "You would have different types of vessels for different types of jobs," he said. "We had to rush doing the Narn ships and I'm fairly disappointed, purely because of the fact we had to rush them. I've got some ideas for doing new ships that we'll bring in. We have an episode coming up where we're going to do some more Narn stuff and

"We have a huge soup of drama we can dip into whenever we want, a quarter million residents and fourteen recurring roles."

—Creator J. Michael Straczynski—



Story editor Larry DeTillo, mapping out creator Joe Straczynski's ambitious five-year series plan, a veteran of Straczynski's CAPTAIN POWER.

bring in more elegant designs as opposed to it being the quick, blocky ship. We'll come in with something more sophisticated and each time we can add different ships and cultures. There's plenty of opportunity to go crazy." Added Thornton wryly, "Think of the model kits."

Ultimately, Thornton, who recently completed work on the Paramount super-car series VIPER, hopes that he will be able to provide many of the settings both off—and on—the station. "Creating a set is a finite cost and there's no way to shortcut it," he said. "Doing CG sets is very different. All you need is a few boxes and blocks painted blue and wack the actors in there and put it together. That requires having a motion-control camera so you can recall the moves you're making and bring them into a computer environment which we did with VIPER quite successfully."

Jerry Doyle is also excited about the prospect of taking his character boldly where no series has gone before over the course of his own five-year

mission. "I look forward to going five years because I was told in the last episode of the fifth year that I go out in this giant fireball blaze of glory or something like that," enthused Doyle while relaxing in his trailer. "You know, it's like standing on the bridge with two bottles of bourbon and the twelve gauge going, 'Come on, bring it on baby.'"

Noted Steve Burg, who has served as the show's conceptual illustrator, and has worked on some of the biggest science fiction productions of the '80s and '90s, including THE ABYSS and TERMINATOR II, "We've had a long dry spell for big, epic science fiction," Burg commented. "Not since the early to mid-'70s have there really been these huge productions done by people who really got science fiction. We need another real one, someone who gets it. James Cameron is very into science fiction, but

he's a rarity and Joe [Straczynski], who's never really had the chance, yet, is getting his shot."

For producer John Copeland, creating the universe of BABYLON 5 on a weekly basis is a dream come true. "The one picture I've had up on my wall which sums it all up for me is this great black-and-white still that was taken on the set of YOUNG MR. LINCOLN. Henry Fonda is standing at this tree overlooking the crook of the Ohio River and it's a process screen and the tree is just a trunk and there are two C-stands with a baton across them with the spanish moss hanging down and a carpet of grass. The rest of it is on a stage and that's what this is all about; making this picture that becomes something real—that's what's exciting about BABYLON 5. We're creating scenes and images that don't exist, but are 1's and 0's and little electronic on's and off's. I guess its the closest you can get to doing magic and not getting burned at the stake." □

5

CAPTAIN POWER

The show that first united many of the creators of BABYLON 5.

By Mark A. Altman

BABYLON 5's spiritual, if not technical, forbear was a little-seen show called **CAPTAIN POWER & THE SOLDIERS OF THE FUTURE**. Set in the far-future it chronicled the war between humans and artificial, non-living chemically spawned machines, the Bio-Dreads. It also marked the first reference to BABYLON 5 in a throw-away line by one of the soldiers of the future, Major Michael "Tank" Ellis.

What makes **CAPTAIN POWER** of particular note though was that it was the first science fiction effort uniting BABYLON 5 producers Doug Netter, J. Michael Straczynski and John Copeland, which featured scripts by B5 writers Larry DeTillo and a writer's bible by Marc Scott Zicree.

"In that show we tried to do a story that went on across a number of episodes," said Straczynski. "It was a heavy effects show and we learned how to handle science fiction in an action context without losing the audience. We learned a lot from that show."

CAPTAIN POWER was also the show on which Straczynski was introduced to special effects and computer graphics wizard, Ron Thornton. Although **CAPTAIN POWER** utilized primitive CGI for its "digitized" adversaries, Thornton built traditional miniatures for its ambitious battle scenes. "We had to pull every trick in the book to get the production value into it," said Thornton. "There were a certain number of shows that needed to be produced and a certain texture in terms of the miniatures that had to be created in no time with fairly little money. It was an amazing learning experience."

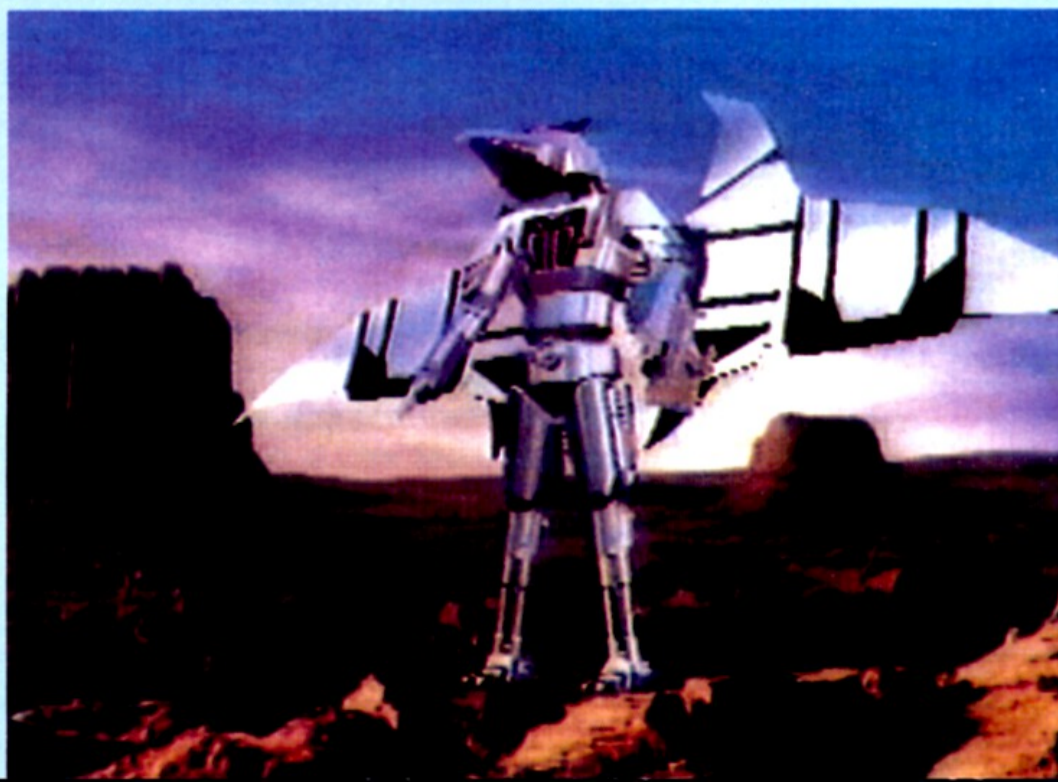
Noted BABYLON 5 and **CAPTAIN POWER** producer John Copeland of the series complicated visual effects, "There was a lot of potential that ultimately went unrealized.

We told some really cool stories and we took some really interesting chances with effects which were very cutting edge at the time. We had computer-generated bad guys before **ROGER RABBIT**, in a 30-minute show made for \$300,000. It's a similar kind of economics to what we're doing on BABYLON 5."

Despite being looked upon as a children's show, largely because of its connection with a Mattel toylines, the series dealt with adult issues, including the death of one of its main characters, Jennifer "Pilot" Chase. "**CAPTAIN POWER** would have been a great show if there hadn't been a toylines," sighed Copeland. "It was taking two varying objectives that had different ends and trying to braid them together into a single rope. We needed to have a certain amount of playtime with the toy in each episode so the toymaker could sell more toys while the guys writing the scripts and the filmmakers making the show just wanted to tell a good story."

Copeland admitted that shooting in Canada because of its lower costs and higher exchange rate handicapped the production since the country lacked the post-production facilities to adequately realize such a complex series. "We couldn't do things the way they were done down here where

The futuristic series featured ambitious computer graphic visual effects for 1988, like Sauron, one of the Bio-Dread machines seeking to wipe out humanity.



CAPTAIN POWER, the spiritual precursor of **BABYLON 5**, a Canadian-produced series tied to a Mattel toy line, interactive guns that didn't work.

you could just go to a place like CIS or Planet Blue where you've got the tools to do wonderful work," he said. "We did some really wildly innovative things with mattes that were actually photographs we took of our models that Ronnie [Thornton] painted."

Ultimately, what proved to be the show's undoing was a backlash against toy-based children's television shows spearheaded by children's activist, Peggy Charren. "She and all of those liberal thinkers really took exception to the violence, but there was a lot of fault in that," said Copeland. "They had one child psychologist that came out with her and completely badrapped us. It was **COMBAT** meets **STAR TREK**, a bunch of soldiers fighting for humanity's sake against the mechanized entities that were trying to take over the world."

Production problems arising from the toylines also helped sideline the show. The **CAPTAIN POWER** toys were promoted as interactive whereby you could use them at home to shoot at the television screen and accrue points for accurate hits. As a result, the special effects needed to utilize the technology which would allow the toy to function properly.

"The prototypes we had of the toy were amazing," said Copeland. "They could read a signal that was the size of my thumbnail from 20 feet away

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BIRDS II: LAND'S END

Universal remakes its horror classic for Showtime cable.

By William Wilson Goodson Jr.

Thirty years ago Alfred Hitchcock finished his first and only real horror fantasy, *THE BIRDS*. Set in California, it asked a simple but frightening question: What happens to mankind if one of the simplest of the earth's creatures, like the birds of the air, decided to turn on mankind. Now the father and son team of Norman and David Rosemont (*ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT*) have produced *THE BIRDS II: LAND'S END* for Universal/MCA with Rick Rosenthal (*HALLOWEEN II*) directing, filmed in Wilmington, N.C., on the famous Outer Banks. The movie premieres on Showtime cable March 19. Rosenthal called the film a non-linear sequel to the Hitchcock movie, with no continuity in the characters or plot, only a similar theme.

Rosenthal wanted to shoot the film in the northwest. Brad Johnson (*ALWAYS*) plays an ex-rodeo cowboy with wife Chelsea Field (*THE LAST BOY SCOUT*) who moves to the old isolated house of the title with their two daughters, new comers Stephanie Milford and Megan Gallagher. The film also features Jan Robes as a lighthouse keeper and *BIRDS* star Tippi Hedren in a cameo as a store owner. When asked why



Set on the fictional Outer Banks peninsula of the title, the sequel is a virtual remake with no plot connection to the original film.

they ended up filming in Wilmington, Rosenthal declared "If I was making a movie that had a lighthouse, a house at land's end, and a marina, I would definitely come to a place where there is no lighthouse, no house at land's end, and no marina that you can control. That's the way things go in a movie." In Wilmington's favor Rosenthal said he found a good selection of movie technicians and artisans. He insisted, "They're young and enthusiastic and some of them are a lot better than their Hollywood counterparts."

He also found the Wilming-

ton area offered a good selection of locations within an hour's drive. He and the writing team of brothers Jim and Ken Wheat (*THE FLY II*, *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET IV*) in just three days of scouting found the basic locations needed. They finished a 97-scene outline in another four days and a full script in about two and a half weeks. The theme of the film is, according to the director, "What man does to nature, nature does to man," with the birds taking vengeance for centuries of human abuse, in particular an oil spill near Gull Island, an attempt to give the film "a '90s ecological thrust."

Production designer James Allen (*FX II*) gave the film a definite Outer Banks flavor, filming in the marina area of Southport, a small town about an hour from Wilmington, outfitted with new signs. A tavern was dubbed The Tides, the name of the restaurant that figured prominently in the first film.

For the film's main setting, the old house at the mythical place called Land's End, Allen directed the construction of a two-story, two-sided false facade beside a large parking lot overlooking a wide flat marsh. According to Allen, he, Rosenthal, and director of photography Bruce Surtess (*THE SHOOTIST*) took their inspiration from the works of Andrew



Brad Johnson and Chelsea Field under attack by a flock of seagulls.

Wyeth, landscapes like "Christine's World," which show large open spaces with the foreground dominating. The interior is designed to be charming, but becomes sinister with a twist in the lighting. One of the children brings home a friendly little toy bird that in silhouette becomes a monster.

Surtess said he planned to make most of the film look "kind of on the warm side." Using gold filters on both the lights and cameras will give the interior of the house a warm summer-time look. Outdoors most of the film was to be shot between 4:00 and 8:30, with warm, not hot light, and long shadows. Filters up the red in the sky, with labs adding more during processing, dropping the exposure so it's not so bright.

Makeup for the film was handled by Jeff Goodwin

Hitchcock echo: lighthouse keeper Jan Rubes, found with his eyes pecked out.





BIRDS II

BIRD WRANGLING

Bird trainer Gary Gero on getting the film's avian stars to perform.

By William Wilson Goodson Jr.

LAND'S END may be the first film where the filmmakers wanted birds to fly into every outdoor scene. In fact on most locations they were throwing popcorn around the set hoping to attract wild birds. However they could not depend on them.

The bird trainer for THE BIRDS II, Gary Gero (LADYHAWKE), started his career in Hollywood working for Ray Berwick (BIRDMAN OF ALCATRAZ), the animal trainer on the original Hitchcock film, but not until a year after it finished. A self-taught falconer, Gero learned about training a number of other animals from Berwick and eventually started his own company, Birds and Animals Unlimited.

For THE BIRDS Berwick had to trap several hundred adult birds and use them with almost *no training*. Gero had only eight weeks to prepare, but his company had on hand sufficient numbers of ravens, pigeons, and other birds that they had raised and trained. The birds had to be trucked across country from California to the South Carolina filming site, with staples like 50 pounds of pigeon feed per day along and specifications like meat for the hawks. In training Gero noted "everything we do involves food, though it is paired with praise."

During filming pigeons (standing in for sea gulls) were required to fly in a cluster from one side of the set to the other. The flock was placed in one box while seed was placed in another on the other side of the set.



Gero with one of his avian actors during filming in North Carolina, a protegee of animal trainer Ray Berwick, who trained birds for Hitchcock's original.

Gero stood behind the empty box, giving audio and visual signals the birds were conditioned to follow, whistling and waving a paddle with a big red dot on it. As the birds flow over and into the box his waving paddle looks like the signal for a plane to land on an aircraft carrier.

The birds also have to be *trained to ignore screaming people* running between their boxes during the mass attack scenes. This is done simply by having people run back and forth during practice sessions. In fact Gero insisted the hardest part of his job is finding someone willing to do this.

For scenes shot at a distance the easily trained pigeons, which Gero listed as among the three most intelligent types of birds, stand-in for sea gulls. Gero also trained a number of gulls not only to fly from place to place but even to retrieve.

The young girls in the film have a pet song bird which eventually turns on them. Gero trained four starlings as stand-ins, to fly to people and in and

out of rooms, even to peck on command.

The birds which came rapping, not so gently tapping on the windows at night were appropriately ravens, several of which have been with Gero for years. Their trainers can tap something and they will peck at it, expecting a reward later, of course.

Birds and Animals Unlimited also provided the pet dog which valiantly saves the girls from the attacking birds. The part was played by Luke, a four-year-old Yellow Lab Cross. He actually battled a phony hawk made of a

foam material hung overhead. According to Gero "we just played with him like he was playing with one of his toys."

For scenes where the camera follows a bird, director of photography Bruce Surtees stressed the importance of keeping them in the foreground, within 20 feet of the lens and between the camera and the actors so they are not *lost in the background*. □

Filming a bird attack when real birds wouldn't do: puppeteer Kevin Brennan manipulating one of his effects birds.



Pigeons were used as gull stand-ins trained to fly back and forth on the set.

(BLUE VELVET, CATSEYE) of Wilmington, aided by assistants Sandra Orsolyak and Mary Lampert. Rubes as the lighthouse keeper was fitted with a design that suggested his fall from the lighthouse and discovery after being scavenged by birds. Goodwin also designed the makeup for a game warden found washed up on the beach with his eyes pecked out. The pecked eyes of the farmer in Hitchcock's film was done with mortician's wax, and then, according to Goodwin, optically enhanced with dark spots over each eye. Goodwin used a prosthesis worn over the eyes. The section over the eyes is actually convex but careful coloring makes it look concave, showing deep pits. To simulate a head smashed against the rocks Goodwin said he planned a trick he once employed on

Makeup artist Jeff Goodwin said he sought to avoid contemporary excess.



BIRDS II



SPECIAL EFFECTS

Filming a lighthouse where none exists, and other cinematic tricks.

By William Wilson
Goodson Jr.

The final script for *THE BIRDS II* required a lighthouse, even though there was none in the Wilmington area. Rather than move the entire crew a day's travel away, production designer James Allen (*GHOST STORY*) roughed out a sketch of the outdoor scene and a suitable location was found near Fort Fisher less than an hour's drive from the city.

A model of the famous Cape Lookout lighthouse, originally built for the movie *THE BUTCHER'S WIFE*, was rented and brought to North Carolina. Rocco Giofre (*CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND*) repainted it using non-reflective paint and prepared the tiny bushes around it, which are made of a lichen found on the coast.

Special effects coordinator Ted Rae (*STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE*) worked out the positions and lighting. As he explained it, "Even though the model is only 46 inches high, it scales out to a 110-foot lighthouse. It is a pret-



Filming the model of the famous Cape Lookout lighthouse, built for *THE BUTCHER'S WIFE* and moved to North Carolina. Inset: Filming Jan Rubes live.

ty wide-angle lens and not only can they [the actors] walk into the scene, but they can walk between it [the model] and the camera. The camera is set up so you can also pan them into the shot."

The first scene with the lighthouse in the background ends with the lighthouse keeper, played by Jan Rubes (*WITNESS*), walking past until it is no longer in the background and



then off toward the sea. This took several takes, however, since the shadow of the fishing rod he had over one shoulder would hit the lighthouse that was supposedly over a quarter mile away, destroying the illusion.

For a final macabre touch, the lighthouse seems to be next to a graveyard. The mock burial site used real full-size gravestones, flawed because of a misspelled name or some other reason, which are rented out to film companies. A house matching the miniature was found to shoot interiors.

One important scene in the light room at the top of the lighthouse was shot in the studio. Only half the room was actually built, doubling as both halves, with cuts cued by the light. When the birds smash through a window and attack the lighthouse keeper, the glass was replaced between shots and it was made to seem as though he had been chased around the room and driven out a still unbroken window. □

BLUE VELVET—a towel placed under the shoulders raises them to look like the back of the head is not there.

During the film's final attack scene one actor wears a prosthesis to simulate a big nasty gash. Otherwise most of the special makeup consists of cuts and gashes made with color and gel. A wound on Brad Johnson's hand where a beak is supposed to go through it is a prosthesis designed by bird animator Kevin Brennan (*AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON*). Goodwin, an admirer of Hitchcock's more is less approach to horror said he wanted to avoid the excesses of contemporary slash and cut makeup.

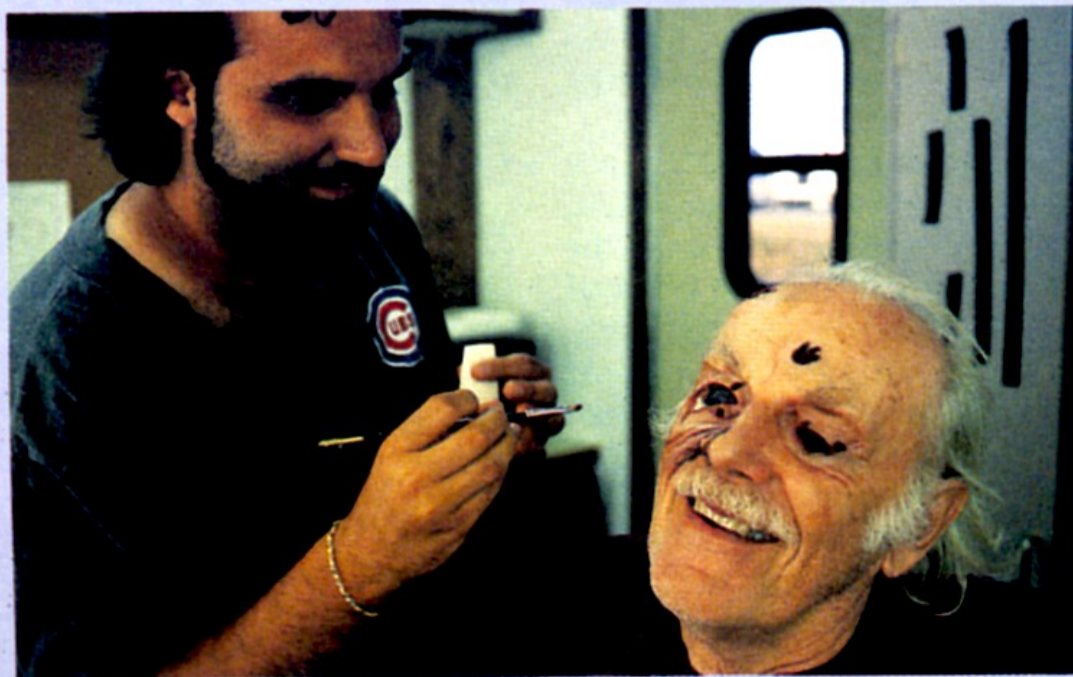
In a few scenes cinematographer Bruce Surtess lifted on a crane to give the audience a literal bird's eye view. Swinging the crane down gave the effect of swooping at someone. On occasion a bird trainer rode up and released a boxed bird which would fly down to another trainer on the ground. By switching camera views the bird could be seen flying toward the camera.

On Hitchcock's *THE BIRDS* they had to tie birds to the actors to simulate attacks. The sequel's bird trainer, Gary Gero, refused to take such measures because he considers them unkind. In a few cases bird trainers appear as extras. Their ravens fly to the trainers even as they run through a screaming crowd. When they land on their trainer it looks like they are attacking—actually they are being rewarded with a piece of meat.

Most of the birds seen attacking someone are really puppets made by Kevin Brennan (*RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III*), his partner Elaine Alexander and technicians Gilbert Liberto and Mark Tyler of the Max company. They constructed three cable puppets: a raven, a sea gull, and a hawk.

Like the Hitchcock film, the sequel ends on an ambiguous note. The last shot shows flocks of birds leaving Land's End and heading for the mainland, making it unclear if their havoc is only the beginning or just the end of the story...and perhaps setting the stage for another sequel. □

Wilmington-based makeup artist Jeff Goodwin applies his prosthetic design to lighthouse keeper Jan Rubes to make it look like his eyes have been pecked out.



BIRDS II

REMEMBERING HITCHCOCK

Tippi Hedren on being victimized by the master.

By William Wilson
Goodson Jr.

In 1963, Alfred Hitchcock's *THE BIRDS* introduced a model, known primarily for her TV commercial work, in her first important film role. Just signed to a personal contract to Hitchcock, Tippi Hedren was surprised to find that she was to be the female lead in Hitchcock's horror thriller. Now, more than 30 years later, Hedren is playing a small cameo role in the sequel. Hedren plays Helen Matthews, the owner of a small-town general store on the Carolina's outer banks.

In keeping with the setting of *THE BIRDS II: LAND'S END*, Hedren wanted to use a slight southern accent. Director Rick Rosenthal decided she should not because it would be disconcerting to her fans. Hedren expressed some regret over the smallness of her role in the sequel and the fact no major stunts or bits of business were planned for her. Hedren said she was originally approached about the sequel while working on another remake of a Hitchcock film, the 1991 Hallmark Hall of Fame production of *A SHADOW OF A DOUBT*.

In *THE BIRDS*, Hedren was involved in several months of preproduction, giving her the chance to study every stage of filmmaking. She referred to it as "a wonderful education in filmmaking with him [Hitchcock] being not only my director but drama coach." However, Hedren admitted, "He knew how to push your buttons," sometimes making obscene remarks to help her get flustered and uneasy for suspenseful scenes.

"He was absolutely charming," said Hedren of Hitchcock. "He could be very funny on the set, but he also knew what would upset you. He used all those methods."

Hedren once declared that Melanie Daniels, her character in *THE BIRDS*, was really Hitchcock's character, not hers. She explained that "many of Hitchcock women were very sophisticated, very well together, looking at life like everything good was go-



Hedren with Alfred Hitchcock on the set of *THE BIRDS* in 1963. Inset: With *BIRDS II* producer David Rosemont, filming a cameo.

ing to happen to them. Then he liked to put them in a difficult situation, not only physically but emotionally, also. He thought that was great fun."

The technically complicated scenes involving the attacking birds and Hedren remain in most viewers' memories, especially where Hedren's character is trapped in an attic room with a flock of attacking birds. She assumed they would use mechanical birds, but the morning of filming, she discovered she would be working with real birds. For several days, all she had to do was scream and react to them.

The scene was shot inside a massive cage to keep the birds from escaping into the rafters. At first trainers wearing thick leather gloves dropped or flew birds at her.

Eventually, the birds stopped landing on her so for the final sequence she had 17 gulls and ravens tied to her by thin cords that went through the rips in her clothes and around her body. The final straw was when one of the ravens scratched her near the eye. Thirty years later she remembered "Oh God, I just got them all off and sat in the middle of the set crying and crying."

She spent the week in a doctor's care. Looking at a picture of the bloody makeup she wore, Hedren remembered how "it got to the point where I couldn't go into the commissary for lunch. I looked so awful it was pathetic."

Hedren managed to get released from her contract to Hitchcock after only one more film, *MARNIE*. He had simply become too demanding, trying to control her personal life as well as career.

Looking at pictures from *THE BIRDS* also reminded Hedren of the dress she wore, designed for her by Edith Head. Six were made and she was able to keep those not damaged in filming. Hitchcock had given her a gold pin of three birds in flight when he told her about the role and she was allowed to keep the pearl necklace and gold watch she wore during the film. The watch she gave to her daughter, actress Melanie Griffith, who lost it. Hedren intended to wear the necklace in *THE BIRDS II*, but forgot to get it out of her safety deposit box. She does wear the same ring she had on during the first film.

After *THE BIRDS*, Hedren had a successful career, appearing in *THE COUNTLESS FROM HONG KONG* and *THE HAR-RAD EXPERIMENT*, as well as a continuing role on the daytime soap opera *THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL*. However, she is still best remembered as one of the Hitchcock blondes and has appeared in a number of thrillers, such as *IN THE COLD OF THE NIGHT* and *THROUGH THE EYES OF A KILLER*. She even did a posthumous collaboration with the master of suspense, appearing in an episode of the revived *ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS*, introduced by a colorized version of one of Hitchcock's filmed prologues. □

SKINNER

A serial killer horror with the Hollywood

By David Ian Salter

"Most horror pictures present the family of normalcy, but there is this weirdness in the closet, and, once in a while the weirdness pops out. What's interesting here is that this picture takes place in the closet, so nothing pops out. We go to it."

Thus, Ivan Nagy described the unique perspective that in his mind sets *SKINNER*, his latest directorial effort, apart from its many predecessors in the horror genre. *SKINNER*'s closet is inhabited by Dennis Skinner, a mild-mannered loner, played by Ted Raimi, whose surname is a dead giveaway of his sole negative characteristic: his preferred method as a serial killer for skinning his victims alive. Nagy and his film have achieved some notoriety due to Nagy's connection to Heidi Fleiss, the notorious Hollywood madam to the stars much in the news. Cine Qua Non Films peddled distribution rights at the AFM in February.

"*SKINNER* begins where *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS* ends," is the catchphrase oft-repeated by the film's cast and crew. The difference is the film's bizarre through-the-looking-glass tone. Not only is the killer the protagonist of *SKINNER*, but the entire nightmare world in which the film takes place is seen through Skinner's eyes. "The skinner is not this guy who lives in the closet and pops out once in a while to skin someone," said Nagy. "We're showing you the life of the skinner. We go inside the closet to live with the skinner. That's the difference."

Nagy's unique take on a subject that is a genre staple may be the result of the freshness that comes with a certain lack of familiarity, for not only is horror a genre that the Hungarian-born director has not had any previous experience in, it is also a genre that Nagy admits to having had little interest in prior to beginning work on *SKINNER*. "I'm not even a horror fan," Nagy admitted. "I don't have that much of a history of watching horror. We're not doing another

"I'm not a horror fan," said Nagy. "I don't have much of a history watching horror. I find comedy important. You can only beat an audience so far."



Nagy (r) directs Ted Raimi as the *SKINNER*, a serial killer who skins the bodies of his victims in a film that "picks up where *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS* ends."

er Freddy, we're doing something very different—different good or different bad...I don't know. It could be a disaster, or maybe a trendsetter."

Despite his professed ignorance of the genre, Nagy noted he was able to quickly learn the unique technical regimens of movie horror. "It's a much more mechanical process than a regular picture, because you can't just set up a scene and cut things," Nagy explained. "It becomes very cutty—the special effects dictate a cut. The effects only work for a certain length of time. For example, you can stay on the guy in the skins for, say 72 frames, and then the skins start looking funny and boring. When they start looking tacky, you've got to get off them. You have to design the scenes so that there is always somewhere to cut away. You have to be more of a technician."

"You also have to be more of an inventor," Nagy continued. "You have to imagine things in your mind. You're constantly psyching the audience, so you have to set up things they'll respond to one way and

then pull out the rug from under them. I find that comedy is very important in horror pictures, because you can only beat an audience down so far. Once they're down in the basement nothing will scare them anymore, so then you've got to get into some light stuff so that everyone feels that it's alright, it's fine, now we can lean back on the chair, and *boom!*—you bring it down again, make it very scary. The truth of the matter is that the drop is only as deep as the height, so you've got to take them up first to be able to drop them. If you don't take them up, you can't have that big dive."

Adding significantly to *SKINNER*'s potential to achieve the proper blend of humor and suspense sought by Nagy is Ted Raimi, brother of horror director Sam Raimi, whose roles up to now have been rather small, with the exception of his lead in *LUNATICS: A LOVE STORY*, a hit on the midnight repertory circuit but virtually unseen anywhere

else. *SKINNER* catapults Raimi to center stage.

The unique blend of horror and comedy that is so essential to *SKINNER*'s success is hinted at in the rubbery nature of Raimi's face, a visage that is slightly reminiscent of one of Raimi's idols, Lon Chaney. It is appropriate that another of Raimi's influences is *The Three Stooges*. "Ted has an excellent sense of comedy and timing," said Nagy. "This picture will have more laughs in it than some straight-out comedies. We're doing some very funny things, very strange interpretations. You can't do it straight, you constantly have to work in an element of the bizarre, it's part of the genre. The more strange it is, the more the whole thing folds into a unity."

Raimi agreed that, far from being mutually exclusive opposites, the humorous and suspenseful elements of the film actually enhanced each other. "Sometimes when you are really frightened, you don't know whether you want to laugh at it, because it's so absurd, or scream in terror," he said. "I'm bringing elements of humor into this

NER!

madam connection: directed by Ivan Nagy.

as much as possible. It won't [detract from the horror] because it's a part of the horror. If somebody's walking and a knife is gouged in his gut and cuts a little circle and all the guts spill out on the floor and he looks at it and then collapses, it's kind of funny. But that's why it is, because you don't die right at first. It's sick but it's scary and funny and sad all at the same time." According to Raimi, SKINNER contains all of those seemingly disparate elements. "It's a drama-slash-horror-comedy."

Raimi did extensive research studying famous serial killers to prepare himself for the role of the outwardly sweet, inwardly nasty Dennis Skinner. "I researched John Gacy and Ted Bundy, went through files, billions of newspaper clippings," Raimi said. "The main thing I found out was that these guys were all very charming. They were all like the guy next door."

Raimi created a past emotional history for his character, to give him something to draw on. "I'm taking all the things that this guy went through as a kid, things that I can relate to, that I made up for him," Raimi explained, "such as not being able to get a date, not being able to make any friends, not being able to fit in anywhere. Just imagine what it would be like to blow those a billion times out of proportion. If your mind wasn't working quite right, and you weren't able to make those logical connections—well, it's okay, when I get older I'll make more friends, maybe when my body gets bigger, I'll be more attractive, whatever. These serial killers are people who can't make those logical connections, for whatever reason. Imagine what those little minute things completely blown out of proportion would do to somebody. If someone doesn't want to date you, most people would say, 'Okay, fine,' and go on to the next person. But the serial killer is the type of person who would say, 'You're going to die then, because you're saying I'm worthless. I don't mean anything!'"

Raimi's insights into the mind of a serial killer, the result of his research, enabled him to give a performance that at times was perhaps a bit too much like the real thing, at least as far as one actress was concerned. Recalled Raimi, "One of the actresses who plays a hooker that I kill got herself so



Traci Lords stars as the one who got away, a victim of the SKINNER, who seeks to track him down, a challenging dramatic role for the underage-porn star-turned actress.

worked up after reading the script that she made a special trip to see me at my house. She told me, 'I just want to make sure that you weren't a real serial killer.' I said, 'No, you don't have to worry about that, I'm just an actor.' She said, 'Okay,' but I could tell she wasn't that impressed with my answer. [Later on the set] I kept getting little side-long glances while I was holding the knife. She was worried that I was going to really just end it for her right there. I think it was just that the script and the whole story had flipped her out so badly that she could not get it out of her head after she saw me that I wasn't really going to kill her. But it created good tension on the set, which I love."

Ricki Lake plays a lonely housewife who takes in Dennis Skinner as a boarder. Lake was eager to try her hand at horror, having worked in comedy and drama since her critically acclaimed debut as the lead in John Waters' first mainstream film, HAIR-SPRAY. "I love being scared," Lake said. "That's why I wanted to see how a horror film was made, and if it was really as scary

making one as it is to watch one. It's not scary at all. It's very technical, which makes it harder to be good. It's not scary, so it's harder to make it real."

Although both Raimi and Lake can be said to have their small coterie of fans, neither have the following of Traci Lords, the former underage porno actress who plays one of Skinner's surviving victims, who seeks to stalk him down. Since her mainstream films debut in Jim Wynorski's 1988 remake of Roger Corman's NOT OF THIS EARTH, Lords has frequently been cast as a kitschy in-joke, as she was in John Waters' follow-up to HAIRSPRAY, CRY BABY. Lords' steady growth as an actress was often ignored by critics and audiences who were more interested in the campy thrill of seeing the notorious former porn queen in legitimate films.

SKINNER has the potential to be the breakthrough Lords has been seeking, the film that once and for all forces audiences to accept her as an actress and not a former anything. Although originally considered for Lake's role, Lords held out for the more challenging and difficult part of Vicki, the heavily scarred and disfigured survivor who seeks revenge.

Lords is nearly unrecognizable under the disfiguring prosthetic makeup that creates the scars that cover much of Vicki's body. Thus voluntarily deprived of the looks upon which her earlier career was built, Lords' performance will be left to sink or swim on its own merits. □

Making up Raimi as Dennis Skinner during filming in Los Angeles, wearing the skin of his victim.



Careful

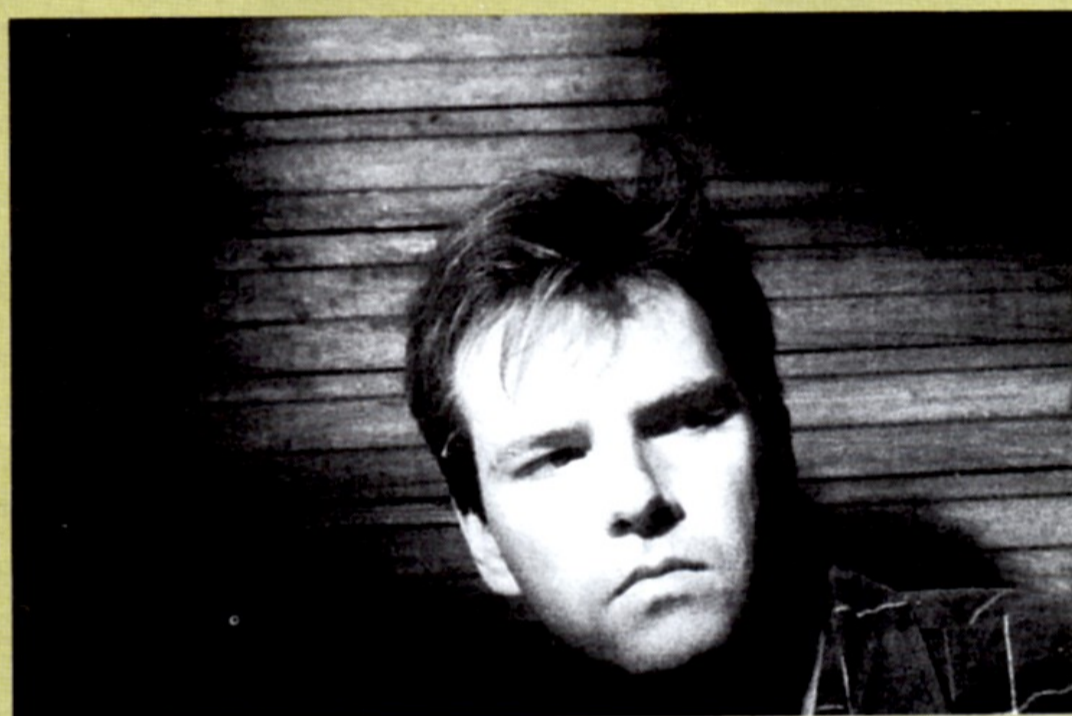
More sublime, surrealistic madness from Canadian director Guy Maddin.

By Dan Persons

Movies should be like battalions of tin soldiers, or soldiers fashioned from wood and lead for the play of children: two-dimensional elements of war, comradeship and forbidden love; capable of infinite arrangements; heart-breakingly artificial but obediently mobile; capable of acquiring a third dimension during brave acts of puffery, only to fall into a smooth silvery flatness and sumptuous unchangeability between these heroic deeds.

Excerpt: From *Salon XXI: A Letter in Severe Terms Suggesting an 8-Point Manifesto for Better Movies* by Guy Maddin.

There aren't many filmmakers who'd be ready to embrace such a vision of the cinematic arts. Then again, there aren't many filmmakers these days who would even bother to issue a manifesto—most of them are too busy overseeing the wine lists at the restaurants they co-own. That hasn't stopped Canadian Guy Maddin—director of such mesmerizing, genre-bending films as *TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL*, *ARCHANGEL*, and, now, *CAREFUL*—from coming up with his own statement of artistic principle. Something of an anachronism when you consider that most contemporary directors are more likely to quote Mike Milkin than Sergei Eisenstein. The document (which isn't above the occasional dip into the obscure—Point 7 reads, in its entirety, "Murder the Environment. Marry the Moonlight.") seems a fitting product for a filmmaker whose passion is the



Maddin, shooting *CAREFUL* in 1992 on the sets he designed, built on three levels of an abandoned grain elevator outside Winnipeg, creating his own weird world.

melding of pre-'40s production styles and philosophies with the fears and pressures of the '90s.

Maddin concedes that, given his background, it's all too easy for him to slip into the cultural dicta of another era: "My family seemed to come out of a time machine, somehow. They were Icelandic pioneers, and Iceland itself, I think, is at least two or three centuries behind the rest of the world. They came straight to Manitoba, Canada, which has no reason to update itself, either. I was raised by a bunch of pre-Victorians, so it's very easy to get into the social-repression monorail and stay there for a long ride."

As the title makes clear, repression is what *CAREFUL* is all about: repression against the honest expression of emotion which, in the film's setting of the fictional mountain village of Tolzbad, could quickly lead to a murderous avalanche; repres-

sion against bodily urges that could transform an innocent family celebration into a Freudian nightmare, rife with suggestions of incest. Mounting his movie as if the reels had been unearthed from some long-sealed film vault, Maddin tells the story of two families destroyed by madness when their members recklessly fail to heed the cautions of the film's opening narrator: to always watch their steps, to forever proceed with caution, to be eternally careful.

CAREFUL was shot several miles outside of Winnipeg, on three levels of an abandoned grain elevator. Within the "studio's confines, Maddin, acting as production designer, built the entire town of Tolzbad and the surrounding scenery. Six sets were constructed to handle the many mountain vistas required for the film. Carpenters, improvising from plasitcene models

created by Maddin, built the wooden sub-structures, which were then covered with "Piggy Poo"—an aptly-named mixture of white glue, paint, modeling clay and pig manure—to simulate snow. "It's all sealed in, in a completely odor-free hardness," Maddin explained. As for handling the design of his first color film, Maddin said his approach—brought to fruition with significant camera and lighting help from Mike Marshall—effectively mirrored the film's title. "I was scared of using color, so I planned [the scenes] very carefully. I used only two at a time, usually, occasionally allowing a third, 'wild-card' color—yellow—into the formula, and then getting scared again and going back to just one color.

"My only rule is: if it's that color in nature, it's not allowed to be that color in the movie. There's the famous book by Joris-Kar Huysmans, *Against Nature*—it was sort of my bible. His favorite flowers were ones that were real but looked artificial, things like that. All trees were painted blue, grasses were carefully painted blue—we went to a lot of trouble to paint grass. The mountains were blue, the skies were green. The prose was purple, that's for sure."

Many of the actors brought in to read Maddin and Tole's occasionally florid, and frequently memorable, dialogue ("Don't Forget to Wear Your Sweater at the Crevasse" T-shirts should be showing up in stores any day now) had worked with the director on previous



Blind to the forces of filial jealousy that he is about to unleash, Count Knotgers (Paul Cox) courts the widow Zenaida in CAREFUL, a Zeitgeist Films release.

films. New to the company was Australian director Paul Cox (A MAN OF FLOWERS, GOLDEN BRAID), who was cast as the much-feared, and rather dim, Count Knotgers after Maddin's first choice, Martin Scorsese, begged out of the role. Cox's star and then-fiancee, Gosia Dobrowolska, was cast in the lead role of Zenaida, the widow whose guilty past leads to the downfall of her two sons.

For an actress accustomed to more classic approaches to developing a role, Dobrowolska occasionally found Maddin's spur-of-the-moment technique disconcerting. "I kept George on the set to help me write lines on the spot," said Maddin. "There's one scene where Gosia faints, but I needed a line where she's actually giving a bit of verbal misdirection about what she's thinking about. I told George that I wanted him to pretend to faint and just let his legs buckle out from under him and come up with a line on the

way down and I would catch him. So he let his legs go and said, 'There's a hairball in my throat! I can't swallow it!' Gosia witnessed this with a great deal of trepidation, and, for the only time, I had trouble getting her to deliver a line. She didn't like that line at all. She tried garbling it as much as possible in the looping."

Other lines of dialogue were handed by Maddin to relatives,

Drugged by son Johann, who is about to remove her clothes, Zenaida (Gosia Dobrowolska) is posed by Maddin to reflect his vision of violated innocence.



who would then translate them into Icelandic and pass them on to other relatives, who would translate them back. "In a way, it's almost like pouring cement around an actor's feet," said Maddin of the results. "It puts all these interesting restrictions on them."

Not all restrictions were aesthetically deliberate, though. Take shooting in a facility never designed to accommodate a film crew. Not only did the CAREFUL staff have to contend with their co-tenant, a trucking company that continued operations throughout the shoot—forcing Maddin to loop all dialogue in post—but the building itself threw both performers and technicians several curves. "It got very hot in that grain elevator," said Maddin. "One of the final, freezing scenes took place, moronically, in the upper stories where the temperature, I swear, was 150 degrees. The actor [lead Kyle McCulloch] had fake snow on his face, but was completely naked underneath, sweating profusely. We're all wearing rubbing-alcohol bandannas, and if you ever bonked your head on the low ceiling beams that were made out of iron you'd actually burn your head. Very strange."

Heat, though, was not the only risk confronted by the CAREFUL crew. Said Maddin, "I still get the willies from a scene where I had a man wearing not one but two eye-patches jump off the top of a mountain. Because he was blindfolded—unnecessarily, too, because the shot was so obscured—he missed the diving pit and landed on the concrete and then crashed into the wooden ribbings of the fake mountain and hurt himself. Whenever I



Tolzbad Butler Gymnasium Frau Teacher (Jackie Burroughs) drills students in the finer points of service.

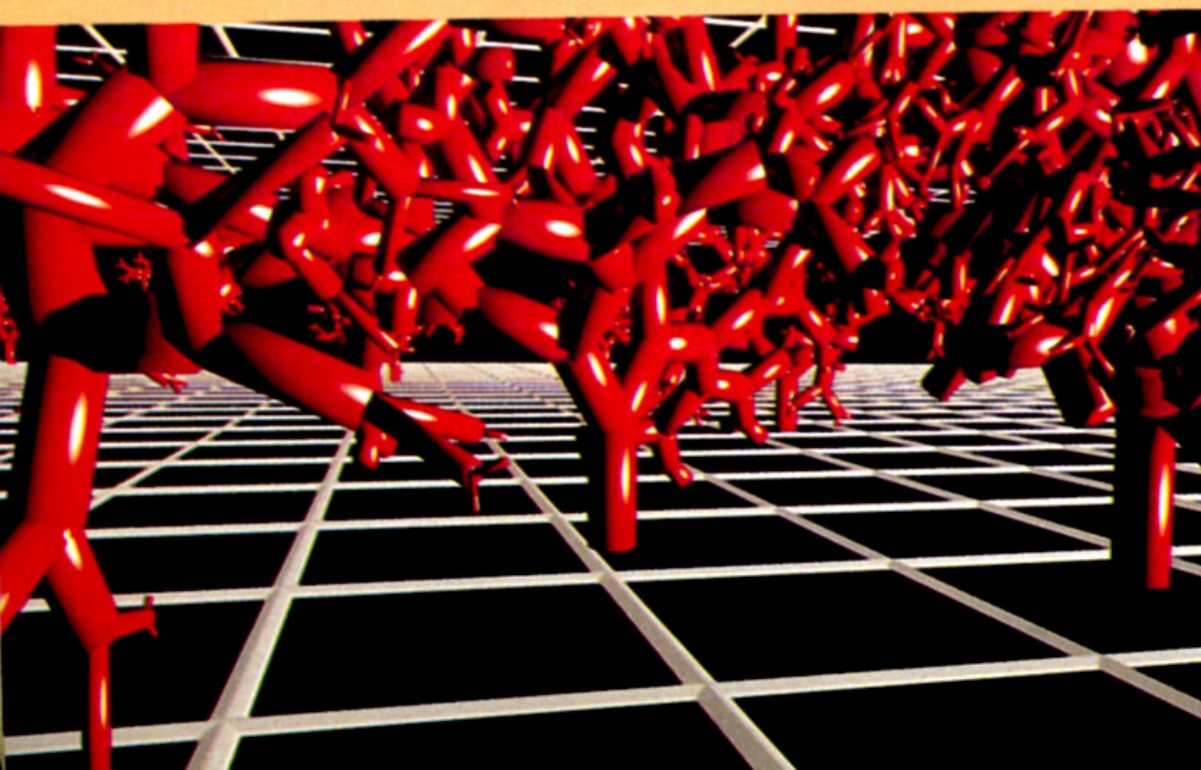
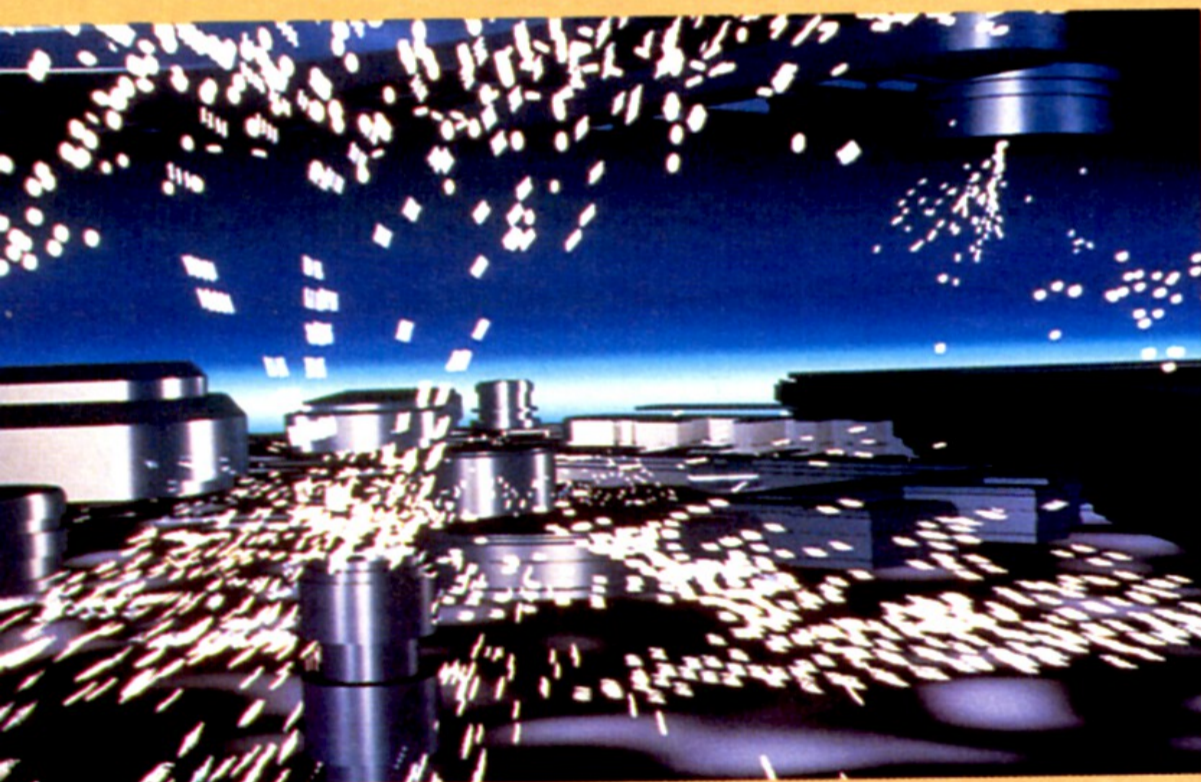
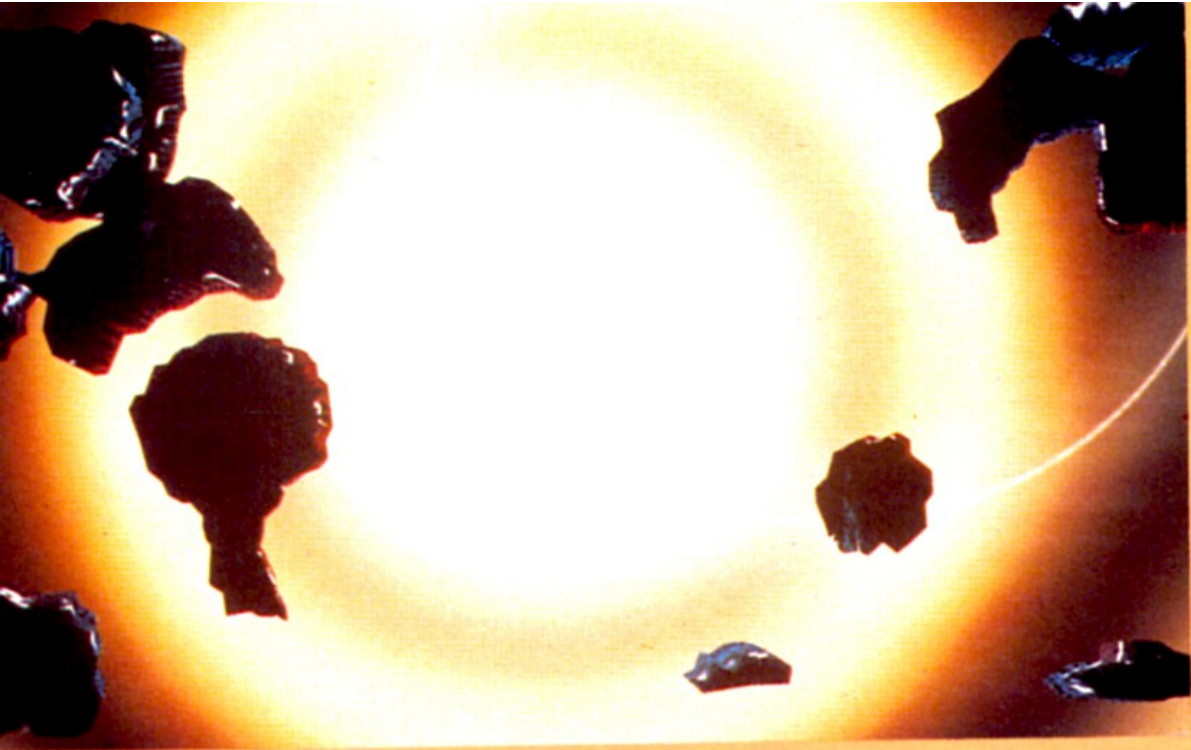
watched that while I was editing, a severe willy the size of a giant hog would travel up and down my spine. He's okay and everything—it's only that the shot turned out so badly I had to ask him to redo it."

CAREFUL wrapped in mid-August, 1992, after six of what Maddin calls, "forty-hour, honey-I'm-home" work weeks. Completed for a total of \$1 million Canadian (about \$800,000 U.S.), the production fell well within budget. "I'm a cheap-skate by nature," said Maddin. "I know we had budgeted something like \$20,000 for props. My good friend, Ian Handford, the properties master, bought all the props in the first two days for \$200. So we were already \$19,800 behind budget.

"Most of the money went on the screen. We had a little money left over, so some of it went towards really lavish cold-cuts at the wrap party."

What's next for Maddin remains up in the air. With its color photography and stronger narrative line, CAREFUL is, Maddin claims, one step closer to his goal of reaching larger audiences (a goal also aided by Kino International's recent release of GIMLI HOSPITAL on tape). "There's a danger: an analogy can be found in the

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GHOST IN THE MACHINE

Computer graphics add visual flair to the tale of a serial killer.

By Michael Beeler

THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE, 20th Century-Fox's showcase for computer effects imagery, apparently got a little spooked by all the CGI dinosaurs stomping about the countryside last summer. Due out in August, then November, the \$13 million production was held back for release until January 7 by Fox, in order to avoid stiff summer and fall competition. "We felt we would have a better shot if we waited until JURASSIC PARK was out of the way," said producer Paul Schiff. "Consequently, we were afforded more time to fine tune the special effects, so we probably have a better film because of it."

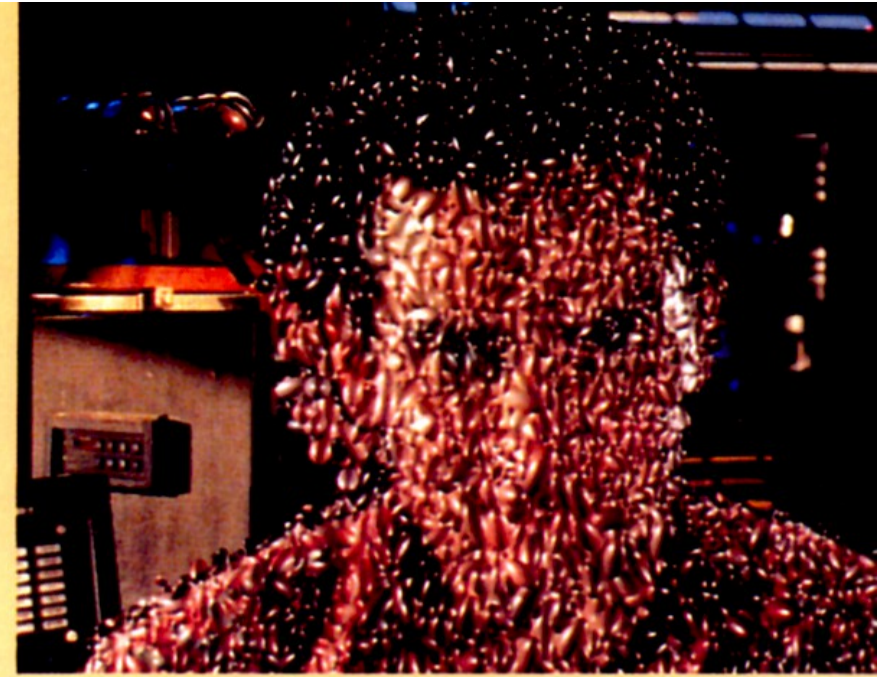
Under the supervision of Richard Hollander, Video Image supplied computer-generated special effects, employing a crew of about 20 film technicians in Los Angeles. Video Image has worked on BATMAN RETURNS, ALIENS 3, and DEMOLITION MAN, and was drawn to GHOST IN THE

MACHINE by the freedom they were afforded in developing the look of the abstract computerized environment in which a serial killer, who has taken the form of a computer virus, resides as he stalks and kills his victims.

"We digitally produced all the bats and the car covering device we called the cloak in BATMAN RETURNS," said Hollander. "The special effects for that film were nominated for an Academy Award, so we're very proud of the work we did on it. But a movie like GHOST IN THE MACHINE is a nice place to blossom. You get to come up with very abstract and strange ideas not based on reality. What's good about the picture is that it has the freedom for the synthetic imagery to be interpreted any way you want. It's a very nice, wonderful freedom."

Video Image, which also produced all the special effects for BILL AND TED'S BOGUS JOURNEY, tried to bring a fresh approach to their vision of what an internal computer envi-

Computer graphics by Video Image of Los Angeles, 1 & 2: Almost going to heaven: abstract graphics seen when Killer Karl is transformed into a computer virus; 3: The Karl virus moving through the data net; 4: The anti-Karl virus.



The particle man human form taken by Killer Karl outside the computer, envisioned by Video Image supervisor Richard Hollander, menacing Karen Allen (above right). The script by William Davies and William Osborne originally conceived of the killer as the cross between a computer and a corpse, held together by staples.

ronment would look like.

Hollander was instrumental in developing, along with Schiff and director Rachel Talalay, the look of the film. For the end sequence, Hollander developed a kind of particle man to represent Killer Karl (Ted Marcoux), who is forced out of the main frame computer by a computer virus developed by Bram (Chris Mulkey), the techno-headed anti-hero of the movie, and the use

of a huge magnetic particle accelerator. The imagery Hollander devised, at the request of Talalay, is partly the result of technology that was utilized in *TERMINATOR 2*, unlike the data man originally conceived by screenwriters William Davies and William Osborne. They envisioned the re-materialized villain as a cross between a segmented corpse and a computer, held together with sta-

ples.

"They all do battle over 23 or so scenes," said Hollander. "It's a combination of live action blue screen photography and digital effects. The particles that make up particle man are computer generated, composed of three layers of green bars, ones and zeros, and skin beads. We used original footage of [Marcoux] to drive the imagery in very specific

ways."

Noted Mulkey of the finished product, "It caters to all those anti-technology fears that we all have back in our stone age memories. This is the kind of movie people will love because of the effects. You'll just sit and watch all the colors and effects and keep asking yourself, 'how'd they do that gag?'"

By avoiding dinosaurs, I guess. □

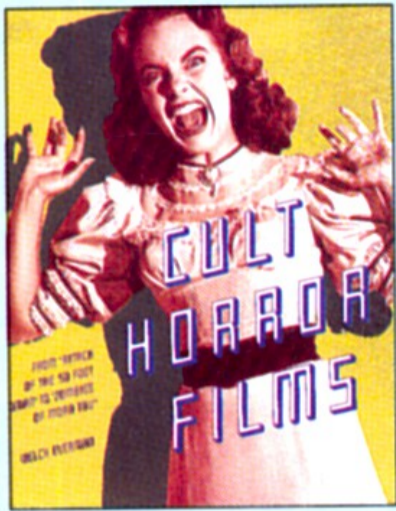
Ted Marcoux, digitized by Video Image as Killer Karl, menaces (l to r) Allen, Chris Mulkey and Wil Horneff at the climax. Hollander's particle man graphic consisted of three layers: a green bar structure, ones and zeros and skin beads.



A digitized Marcoux strangles Allen and Horneff, a composite image rendered from the blue screen live action (inset). Video Image rendered 23 particle man shots for the movie's finale on far less than a *JURASSIC PARK*-sized effects budget.

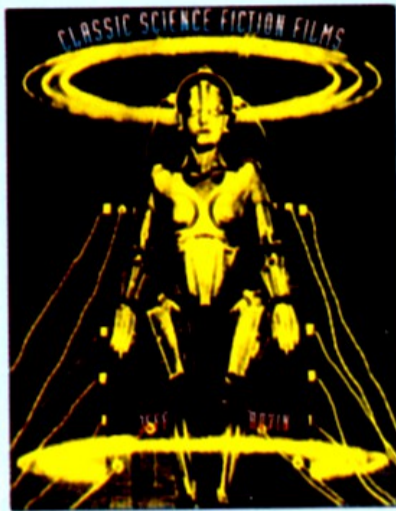


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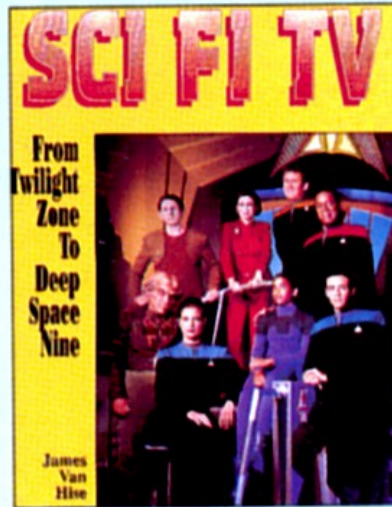
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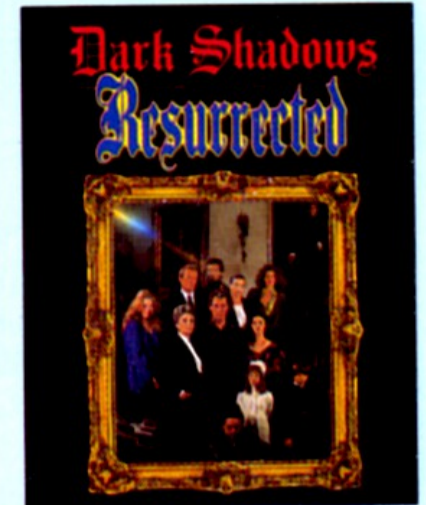
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DECEIPT

Directed by Albert Pyun. RCA/Columbia. With: Norbert Weisser, Samantha Phillips, Scott Paulin.

Since his 1982 debut, *SWORD AND THE SORCERER*, the prolific Albert Pyun has created a cinematic milieu that often exhibits a disregard, or even contempt, for such cinematic niceties as plot, characterizations and continuity. Because of this, even his worst efforts (*ALIEN FROM L.A.*, *DOLLMAN*) are oddly fascinating, exhibiting not so much Ed Woodian incompetence as much as Pyun's own unique, if often incomprehensible, filmic language. Still, even the most dedicated student of Pyun's eccentric methods will be ill prepared for this, his latest effort.

While the title and box art seem to imply just another erotic thriller, in reality, the film is actually an epic tale of a battle between alien invaders and brave human defenders, with the continued existence of the Earth at stake. Budgetary considerations have forced Pyun to scale back a bit on the scope of the confrontation. There's just two aliens inhabiting dead human bodies, and just one lone defender whose gender is pretty obvious since she spends 98% of the film in her bra and panties. As to the tableau for this intergalactic struggle? Just a single set, a sparse-looking abandoned warehouse about the size of your living room. Plot? We don't need no stinking plot. The cast just spouts reams of seemingly improvised dialogue while waiting for the camera to run out of film.

There seems to be an underlying environmental theme that may be serious on Pyun's part. Still, the whole affair smacks of something thrown together, impromptu, over a single weekend with equipment and film stock left over upon completion of some other Pyun opus. A hint of this is evidenced in the closing credits (which, inexplicably, are long enough for a Spielberg epic) by a thank you to Jean Claude Van Damme, "Without whose help this film would not have been possible." Considering that Pyun last directed Van Damme in 1989's *CYBORG*, one has to suspect that this one has been gathering dust in Pyun's closet for some time.

If you have a propensity for watching bad films while under the influence of mind-altering substances, this film is for you. You won't need to drink, swallow, snort or shoot anything. This is one wacky movie. ● John Thonen

DEMOLITION MAN

Directed by Marco Brambilla. Warner Bros. With: Sylvester Stallone, Wesley Snipes, Sandra Bullock, Glenn Shadix.

As far as mindless entertainment goes, you could do worse than this, the latest Joel Silver-produced crunchathon which boasts the novel conceit of setting its high-octane action in a utopian futureworld.

Unfortunately, the dystopian dynamics of its *TIME MACHINE*-like milieu, in which the perfect world of the surface dwellers is disrupted by anarchist forces from below, are mostly played for laughs, diluting the impact of its potentially provocative science-fiction concept. What is left is a rather mundane action/adventure tale, a perverse hybrid of *SLEEPER* and *48 HOURS* with Stallone's dethawed cryo-cop John Spartan coping with the brave new world he has been thrust into while being partnered with Sandra Bullock's Lenina Huxley, an overzealous futurecop with a large vocabulary of malprops. Borrowing a page from Woody Allen the film has the audacity to swipe one of *SLEEPER*'s classic scenes, substituting a virtual reality sex gag for Allen's mirthful montage involving an orgasmitron.

Ironically, for a film about the future, Marco Brambilla's feature-directing debut *DEMOLITION MAN* promises to be even less timeless than such dated '70s relics as *LOGAN'S RUN* and *SILENT RUNNING*. Admittedly Dennis Leary's diatribes as rebel leader Edgar Friendly are quite humorous—but will anyone get the joke five years from now when Leary is a trivia question on MTV game shows? The film's disdain towards its future society and tacit ap-



DEMOLITION MAN Sylvester Stallone, knitting his heart out in frustration with virtual reality sex.

proval of graphic violence and brutalization seems to be the wrong message for our times.

But on a comic book level, this is the most fun you can have without having to read thought balloons, or for that matter, think at all. With enough witty banter between its appealing leads, malevolent histrionics from villain Wesley Snipes and *TOTAL RECALL*-like carnage may indeed be the future of the action genre which seems to have milked the past and present for all its worth and now looks toward the future for some new spins on the old James Bond kiss, kiss, bang, bang formula. ●●● Mark Altman

EMPIRE OF THE DARK

Directed by Steve Barkett. Nautilus Film Company. With: Terry Hendrickson, Chris Barkett, Dan Speaker, Dawn Wildsmith.

Independent film hyphenate Steve Barkett slices out a space for himself in the direct-to-video market with his first effort since 1981's *THE AFTERMATH*. Writer, director and co-producer Barkett plays officer Richard Flynn, who, 20 years ago, witnessed the ritual murder of his girlfriend and passed through a dimensional gateway to Hell to rescue her baby. Flynn leaves the force to become a bounty hunter. But the devil's agents are up and about, slaughtering nubile young ladies in sacrificial garb that might have come off the bargain table at Frederick's of Hollywood. Through the boy he rescued 20 years before he discovers his love is still alive in suspended animation. It's all a matter of taking the proper firepower, with a little swordplay thrown in, to cross the gates of Hell and rescue the only woman he ever truly loved.

Stop-motion animation, bizarre creatures, rapid martial arts action and locations as diverse as a local market for a shootout and Mount Shasta for a prolonged sword fight give the film a greater scope than most made-for-video films could hope for. But the script is laden with exposition, the performances range from competent to embarrassing and pudgy Barkett simply doesn't cut a very dashing figure. Emmy nominee Robert Stromberg delivers some fine visuals and Barkett keeps his camera moving. A nice try, but no cigar. ● Frederick Szebin

FAMILY DOG

Directed by Chris Buck. CBS (TV)/Nelvana/Amblin/Universal/Warner Brothers. 6/93, 30 mins. Voices: Martin Mull, Molly Cheek.

Critics bent over backwards to bury this Steven

Spielberg/Tim Burton executive-produced series, once intended as the animated flagship of CBS' assault on *THE SIMPSONS*, but eventually slipped—two years late and semi-surreptitiously—into the 1993 summer schedule. What the show lacked in the sharpness of its satire, it made up for in creative design (simple, skillfully juxtaposed geometrics conjure up memories of the old UPA studio), and the sheer, all-too-commonplace creepiness of its central family. No super-slacker Barts or wunderkind Lisas here. The parents snipe, the kids toddle around in sugar-fueled, TV-dazed comas, and if there's anything all four humans agree on, it's that the source of their misery is the little, four-legged set of adjacent arcs—known only as "the dog" or, more frequently, "the stupid dog"—that dares to seek their affection. (Unfortunately, the series cut back on the layered dialogue that, in the original, *AMAZING STORIES* episode, helped conjure a household in which each member was spiraling off into his/her own universe.)

A little of this goes a long way, mind. Could be that few would want to check in with this family on a regular basis (and the plotlines of the first two episodes—both centering on family outings—suggest that there's only so much you can do with a just-barely-anthropomorphized central character who never speaks). Still, there's something to be said for the tartness of the show's observations. ●● Dan Persons

FLESH GORDON MEETS THE COSMIC CHEERLEADERS

Directed by Howard Ziehm. New Horizon Home Video, 101 mins. With: Vince Murdocco, Robyn Kelly, Tony Travis, Morgan Fox.

In the days before home video, when theatrical porn films were coming out of the closet, producers Howard Ziehm and William Osco hit on the idea of a porn epic satirizing the Flash Gordon serial. The result was *FLESH GORDON*, a wildly innovative, funny porn film that rose above its material. Low-budget stop-motion effects by Dave Allen and others brought such cross genre creatures as the dreaded Penisaurus to life.

Now, 20 years later, Howard Ziehm has revived *Flesh*, Dale Ardor and Dr. Jerkoff for another adventure ablaze with primary colors. And it's a dud! The satire and porn elements have been discarded for toilet humor, including a music video performed by singing turds. Clever plot twists have been replaced with sophomoric jokes and sight gags.

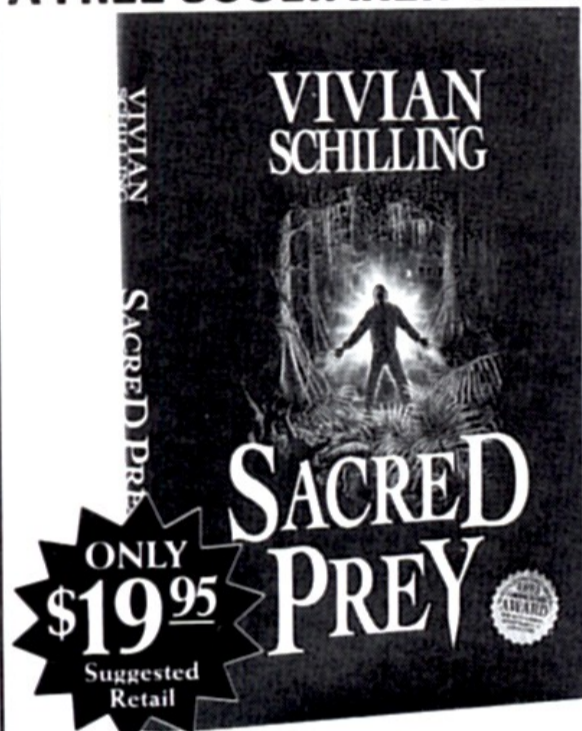
The earth is once again threatened from outer space, this time with an impotence ray, a nod to the death ray in the second Flash Gordon serial, *FLASH GORDON'S TRIP TO MARS*. When the planet Screw is ravaged by the ray, the Cosmic Cheerleaders, desparate for a lively male, kidnap *Flesh*. Soon Gordon finds himself up against the

Flesh flees from a stop-motion adversary in FLESH GORDON & THE COSMIC CHEERLEADERS.



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villainous Evil Presence who has kidnapped Dale Ardor. But, alas, there's nothing here worth a rental. Leave this one on the shelf.

● Dan Scapperotti

FREAKED

Directed by Tom Stern and Alex Winter. 20th Century Fox, 79 mins. With: Randy Quaid, Brooke Shields, William Sadler, Megan Ward, Bobcat Goldthwaite, Mr. T, Derek McGrath and Karyn Malchus.

Psst! Wanna see a fast, funny film with great makeup effects by three great makeup artists? Screaming Mad George, Tony Gardner and Steve Johnson. Plus stop-motion animation by Dave Allen? Plus clay animation by the Chiodo Brothers? It's a mystery why a film with so much promotable talent was dumped into theatrical release by 20th Century Fox. Not only was it not screened in advance for the press but also it opened in a single Manhattan theatre with no TV or newspaper advertising. To find it you practically had to be psychic and, frankly, I was the *only* one in the audience at the second show opening day.

Which is a shame because, surprisingly, the film is actually goofy fun, in an AIRPLANE-kind of way. Alex Winter plays an egocentric ex-child star who is lured into celebrity endorsement of a banned chemical. When he arrives in Santa Flan, the one country where this stuff hasn't been banned, he and his friends are kidnapped by a mad redneck scientist played with gusto by Randy Quaid, and mutated into sideshow freaks. The original title of the production was HIDEOUS MUTANT FREAKZ.

Among the sideshow freaks are Mr. T as a bearded lady, and the wonderful Derek McGrath, unrecognizable under makeup as a bespectacled worm. Keanu Reeves is also unrecognizable and unbilled as Ortiz, mutated into a dog; and Bobcat Goldthwaite has his looks improved by trading his head for a sock puppet.

This loony comedy is preceded by an animated short called GAHAN WILSON'S DINER which perfectly captures Wilson's trademark drawing style, colors and macabre sense of humor. A delightful outing and a big secret not likely to be discovered until it turns up on video.

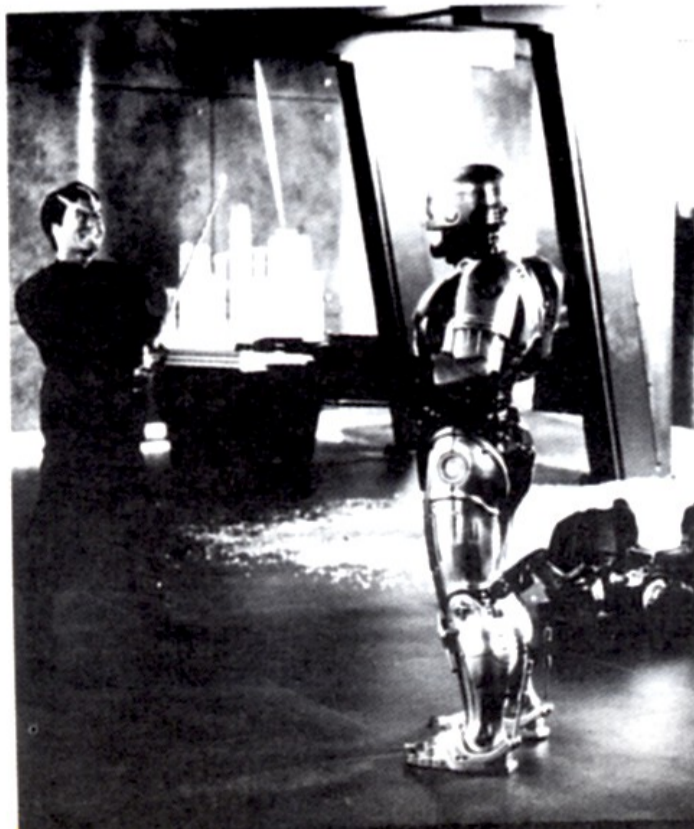
●●● Judith P. Harris

NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Directed by Henry Selick. Touchstone, 10/93, 74 mins. With the voices of: Chris Sarandon, Catherine O'Hara, Danny Elfman, Paul Reubens, William Hickey.

In years where Schwazenegger took the Big Fall trying to sweeten up his image, and Stallone regained an audience by re-toughening his, one has to wonder if the sub-text of this Tim Burton effort—which amounts to "stick to what you do best"—hasn't had more than a little resonance in the executive suites of Hollywood. One also hopes that the irony of such a message being delivered by Disney's \$20 million,

Robot showdown: ROBOCOP 3 faces the sword-wielding Otomo before heading to TV syndication.



Alex Winter in FREAKED, a comedic and effects gem dumped by Fox, makeup by Steve Johnson.

stop-motion dice-roll isn't lost on those who might be tempted to take it too seriously.

Mixed signals aside, director Henry Selick and his army of Northern California pros (with no small assistance from screenwriter Caroline Thompson and composer Danny Elfman) have taken producer Burton's vision of de-secularized, circa-1960 kitsch—all mock scary spooks and aluminum Christmas trees—and delivered a virtuoso turn that steals the breath away with each successive frame.

Puppets don't just move, they *act*; tabletop vistas turn into environments so enticing that one wishes the stay could be longer than the scant hour and fourteen minutes it is. The story's cunning enough to hold both kids and adults, with both generations finding common ground in the delicious trashing of Christmas traditions. Between the Yuletide exploits of Jack Skellington, Edward Scissorhands, and Batman (all three not coincidentally possessing more than a bit of darkness at their hearts), it seems as if Burton is well on his way to creating the last, truly satisfying Christmas canon of the twentieth century.

●●●● Dan Persons

ROBOCOP 3

Directed by Fred Dekker. Orion, 11/93, 105 mins. With: Robert Burke, Nancy Allen, Rip Torn.

The streets of Old Detroit have erupted into open warfare, inhabitants defending their turf against the encroachment of that all-devouring conglomerate, Omni Consumer Products. Orion Pictures may be right in thinking that an action-packed (as opposed to blood-drenched) tale pitting cyborg cop Murphy (Robert Burke) against his creators will lure the 13-year-olds into the theater. But, man, what a price to pay.

Director Fred Dekker restores some of the emotional underpinnings missing from part two—giving Robo a surrogate family in concerned Dr. Lazarus (Jill Hennessy) and annoying wonder-child Nikko (Remy Ryan)—but so short-changes motivations that it seems Murphy's actions come not from any character-driven source, but from the demands of convention. Corporate satire—precise and incisive in the first film—here is sketched in the broadest terms, while action sequences fail to rise above the desultory. It was always a given that Orion would try to spin the original ROBOCOP off into a series of sequels, but maybe it's time someone at the company realized that a film that got its juice from a crisis of identity is not necessarily the best source material for a franchise. Nevertheless, further adventures are now headed to television, with a Canadian-produced hour series to premiere on syndicated stations in the spring.

○ Dan Persons

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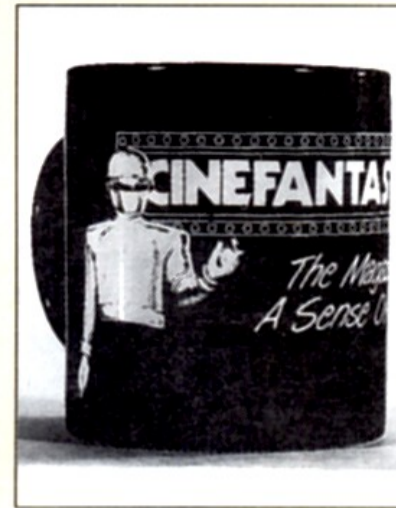
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GUY MADDIN

continued from page 55

great rock bands that seem to lose all their charm, all their power, all their poetry, all their ability to move people as soon as they learn how to play their instruments. They lose all that primitivism. So, I'm scared of learning too much. But, by the same token, it's inevitable that you learn *something*. So, as I learn, I at least hope to control what I've learned.

"I want to intoxicate viewers, I want to create legal drugs with my movies. And I think I know *how* to do it, now." □

STRACZYNSKI

continued from page 26

satisfaction. "I think the main problem in television is that so much money is just pissed away," he said. "A lot is spent on producers' salaries and frivolous stuff. I don't believe in that. I believe if someone gives you a vast amount of money you should be responsible with it. My salary, as the executive producer on this show, is less than I was getting as a producer on *MURDER, SHE WROTE*. If this show succeeds down the road, we'll all make some money. If it doesn't, we didn't deserve it in the first place."

As for his own view of the fu-

ture, Straczynski is optimistic. "You cannot tell me that two million years of evolution, the pyramids, Chrysler, Marilyn Monroe, Aristophanes and two World Wars brought us to *BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD* and that is the grand culmination of evolution. There's something better than that down the road and we've forgotten that. That's what *BABYLON 5* is striving for, to get to that point, whatever that happens to be." □

BABYLON CAST

continued from page 31

something going on?' It played perfectly into our arc."

Straczynski added that he'd consider bringing back one or more of the characters in the future. "I think it would be great down the road because there are definitely ways they could fit in," he said. "There are some revelations about Laurel I'd love to make. There are about ten things that point to the fact that she was involved with the conspiracy, perhaps not of her own volition. I can bring her back for an episode where a ship comes in, the door opens and Laurel Takashima is bloody and battered and passes out and there's your teaser. Now something is chasing her back to *Babylon 5*."

As for the future, Jerry Doyle commented ruefully, "You don't want to stand too close to an airlock when you're walking down the hallway 'cause you can get changed out in this show very quickly. 'Where did Garibaldi go? Oh look, it's his taller, better looking brother with hair.'" □

BABYLON 5 MAKEUP

continued from page 41

For the moment, though, the two Optic Nerve partners have had their eyes opened to what working on a television schedule—and budget—is really like. "On a movie you have two or three months to do something, as opposed to a week or so in television," said Vulich. "We're trying to work within that limitation. I could sit there and look at every little detail and think, 'If only we had a few more days,' but the one thing you have to do is make split decisions, right then and there, 'This is what it has to be.' Unfortunately, sometimes a week later you think maybe it should have been more like this. But that's all part of the job too. It's just got to get done. On films, I might spend a week just doodling and doing designs and brainstorming a little bit more. We just don't have that luxury now. Anytime we have any

downtime we're just doing background characters or making future designs we can try and wedge into an episode." □

CAPTAIN POWER

continued from page 47

and we were able to incorporate that into the image so it wasn't a big blooming thing. But when we had finished the first show and unpacked the first production line version of the toy, they didn't work—not from ten feet away, not from six feet away. They started working from about three feet away. So we called Mattel and said the toy doesn't work and the guys down at engineering and research and development said this isn't any reason to push the panic button. They sent out their guys and spent a weekend in a hotel room with tapes and cranked the color and the chrome. Everything was completely blown out and they said, 'See, it works, it works fine.' As a result, we had to go back and reshoot the action for eight finished episodes we had in the pipeline. It was a disaster, and there was no need for this to have been done. That's part of what brought *BABYLON 5* about. You don't need to go through all this craziness with science fiction." □

LETTERS

CUTTING BATMAN'S ROBIN

I must correct your short piece on BATMAN III [24:6/25:1]. Not just the early drafts, but the "Dictel" shooting of BATMAN RETURNS featured a feisty, sticky-fingered mechanic who saved Bat's bacon when the Penguin remote-controlled the Batmobile. This character was not specifically designated as black, even though a Wayans was cast in the part. He had a bird's name—Jay, which was a delightful joke near the end of the picture. But the inclusion of the birdboy made a complicated story too complicated and I agree with Burton's decision to cut it.

How do I know this? My wife and I did the Golden Movie Storybook adaptation. We have also "novelized" and adapted: THE ROCKETEER, TMNT II: SECRET OF THE OOZE, ROGER RABBIT, WE'RE BACK, HOOK and assorted other Disney films and cartoon shows. It's a living.

The BATMAN special was truly enjoyable and I'd like to point out a couple of in-jokes in the animated series (which I think is the definitive version of the Dark Knight). In "Birds of a Feather," the Penguin boards a bus, and one of the lowlife passengers is Love and Rockets' Hopey. In "Robin's Reckoning," there is a hooker who bears a distinct resemblance to Betty Page, southern accent and all.

Enough fanboy stuff. Now for the rant you expect. I have long been a subscriber to your magazine and truly enjoyed its graphic evolution over the years. Yes, sir, this is one handsome magazine. Ornerly, opinionated and snotty, but very good looking. You have the visuals down pat—now it's time to address the tremendous proofreading problem you have. According to captions, Jill St. John was either the Riddler's "moll" or his "mom," "continued on page 61" said the end of the music sidebar—which continued on page 125! These are but two of an amazing number of typos, misspelled words and wonky pasteups which only an anal retentive (is there a hyphen in that?) would bother to enumerate. C'mon, get someone to proof it or get spellcheck for your typesetter.

Ron Fontes
Phippsburg, ME 04562

HOWARD KAZANJIAN ON DEMOLITION MAN

It is sad reporting when Sheldon Teitelbaum takes inaccurate information published in one magazine (*Premiere*), rethinks it, and then publishes it in his article on DEMOLITION MAN [24:5:18].

Why didn't he ask me for the facts about myself related to this project? He should check with the source rather than make assumptions about the individual he writes.

Please be advised I have never met, let alone was represented by Joel Miller when I first read, then optioned/purchased the rights to Peter Lenkov's DEMOLITION MAN script. Also, Steven Fazekas was not my partner and did not share the amount you reported.

And the article should not have been finished insinuating Lenkov includes me as "the wrong people." Why didn't you ask Lenkov what he thought of Howard Kazanjian before printing your article?

I wish your reporting, as *Premiere's*, would be more accurate and based on fact and not heresy.

Howard Kazanjian
N. Hollywood, CA 91604

[Lenkov was so sick of the whole affair he refused to discuss it and seemed content to let stand the facts as presented by *Premiere*.]

THINKS STALLONE IS FUNNY

Re your coverage of DEMOLITION MAN [24:5:16], I'd like to raise one voice, solitary though it may be, in defense of Sylvester Stallone's comedic performance in RHINESTONE, OSCAR and STOP OR MY MOM WILL SHOOT, all of which I found amusing, if not outright hilarious. In these movies, Stallone appears more relaxed and authentic than in other of his films, emulating the demeanor of the early Cary Grant: earnest but not stuffy, expressive but not idiotic, and capable of applying a sense of humor to himself as well as to his circumstances.

If contemporary comedy is typified by violent slapstick, snide wisecracks, inane or surly characterizations, and incredibly fantastic plotlines, then it may well be that Stallone is out of his depth. But it is offensive to the spirit or artistic freedom (especially the freedom to grow) for any audience of critics to sit in judgment over what kind of film career an actor

should pursue.
Michael J. Dunn
Auburn, WA 98001-9639

CLEARING CHUCK JONES' NAME

After reading your article on the demise of the REN & STIMPY show [24:1:24], I feel that Dan Persons might have been a little off-base with one of his comments concerning Warner Bros animator/director Chuck Jones.

Mr. Persons states, "The Ren & Stimpy Show has been a definitive retreat from Chuck Jones' 'Illustrated Radio.'" This statement seems to imply that Chuck Jones was somewhat responsible for the style of animation that has dominated TV for the last several decades. Actually, it was Chuck Jones who said, "The difference between what we did at Warner Bros and what's on Saturday morning is the difference between animation and what I call illustrated radio." Jones later added, "The best way to tell

the difference is this: if you can turn off the picture and know what's going on, that's illustrated radio. But if you can turn off the sound and know what's going on, that's animation." (Source: *That's All Folks*, pg. 103 by Steve Schneider, Henry Hold and Co., NY).

While I'm willing to give Dan Person's the benefit of the doubt, he should have been more clear about what he actually meant. Besides, have you ever tried to figure out what was going on in a Roadrunner/Coyote cartoon without the picture?

Matt Young
Buffalo, NY 14202-1399

[My error was an assumption that readers would already be acquainted with Mr. Jones' coinage. Thanks for the clarification! Curiously, BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD is a new genre of animation, best appreciated with both sound and picture turned off. / Dan Persons]

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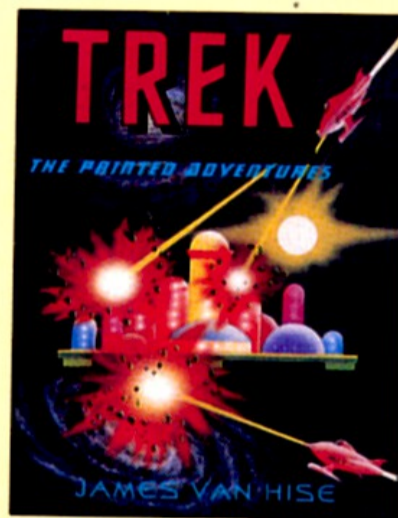
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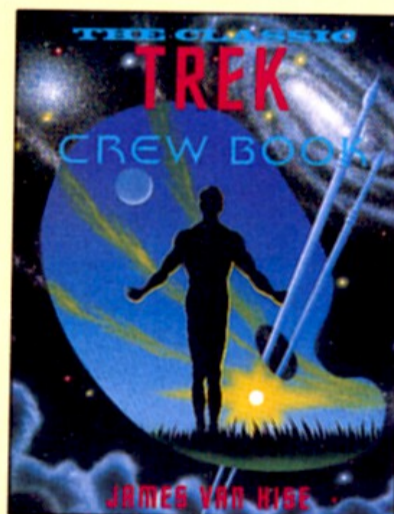
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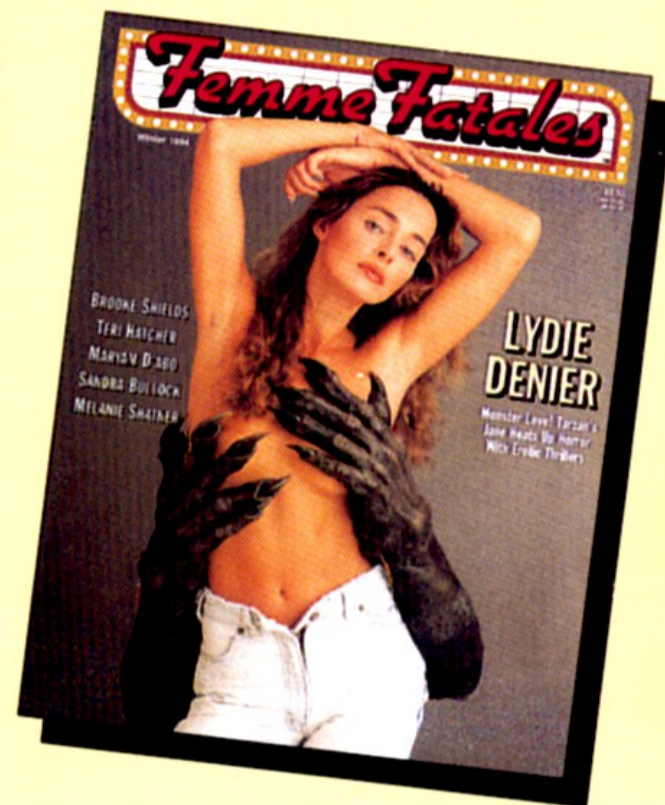
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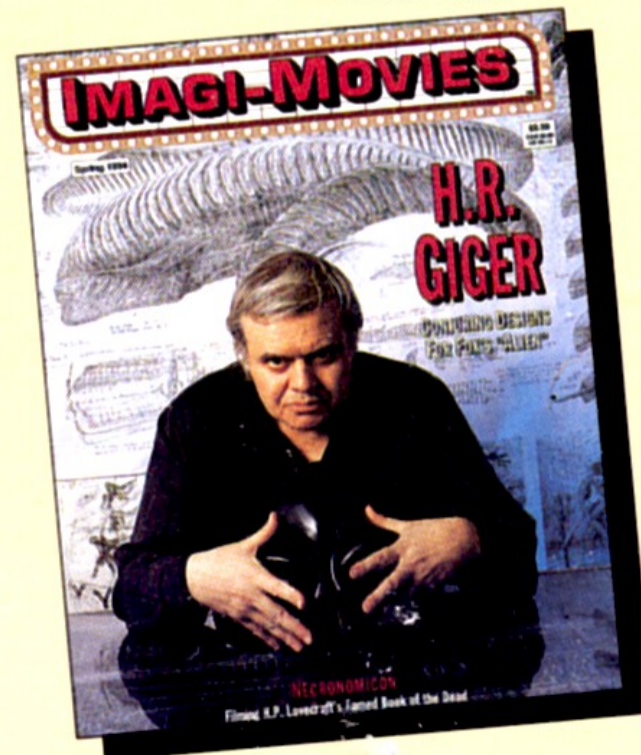


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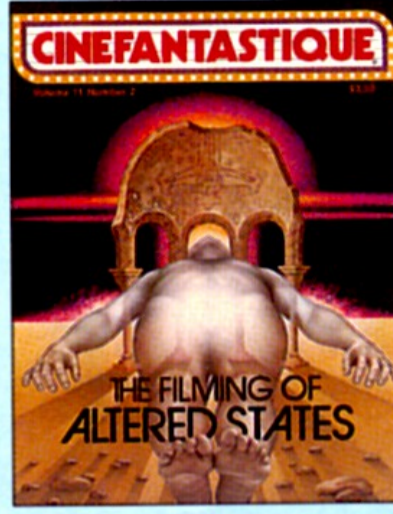
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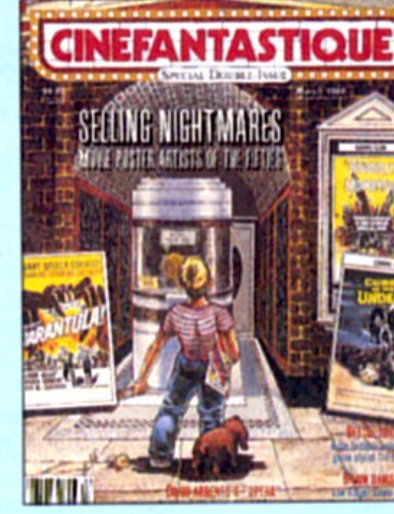
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